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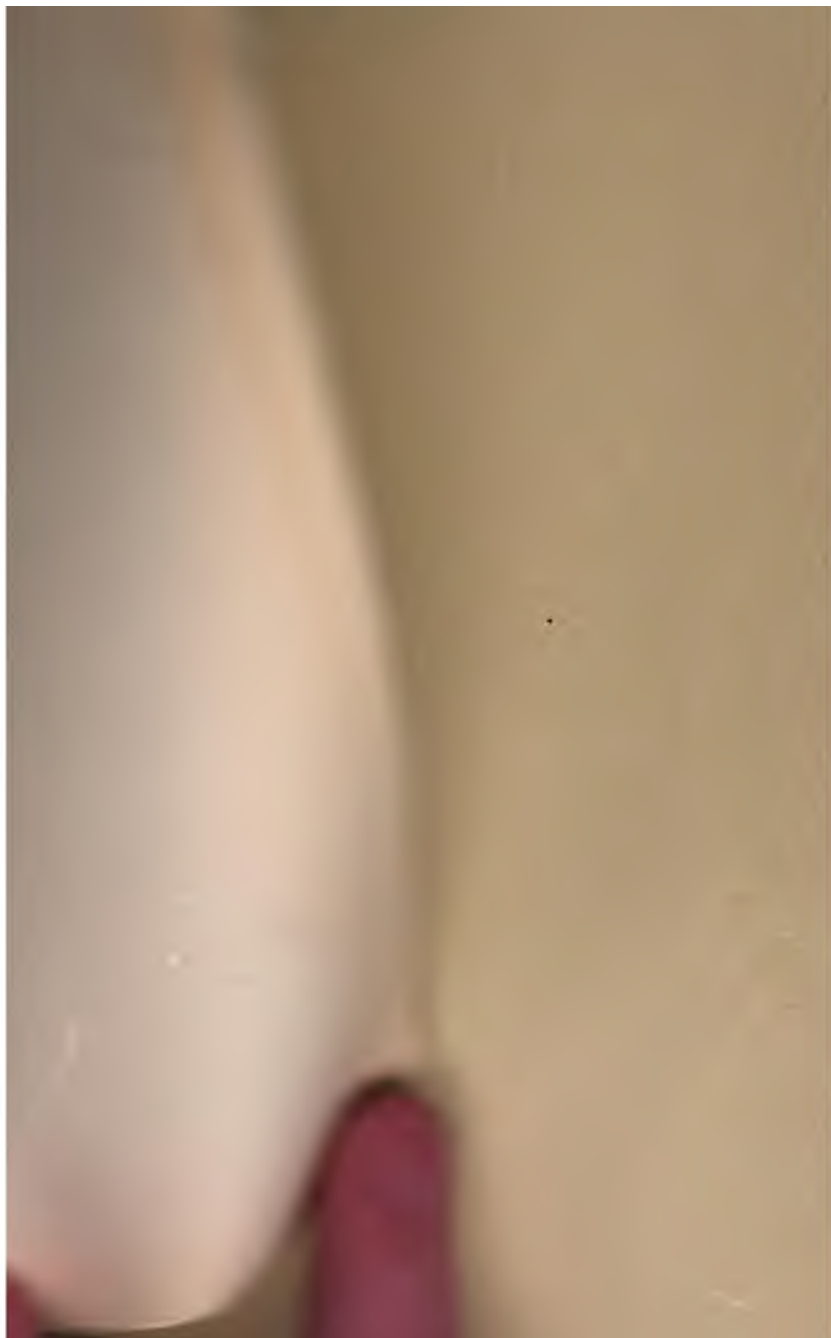
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## **THE AMERICAN TROPICS**













AN AMATEUR EXPLORING PARTY.

# THE AMERICAN TROPICS

NOTES FROM THE LOG  
OF A MIDWINTER CRUISE

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WITH ILLUSTRATIONS

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BY  
WILLIAM THOMAS CORLETT



CLEVELAND  
THE BURROWS BROTHERS CO.  
1908

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## THE AMERICAN TROPICS

### *CHAPTER I*

THE morning was clear and cold, with a crispness in the air that turned one's thoughts immediately to fur coats and steamer rugs. There was the usual commotion, the running to and fro one always sees on an ocean steamer clearing for a long voyage. On deck and below there was the same eager, elbowing crowd of friends of the departing, blocking companionways and obstructing the handling of luggage. Everybody was talking in a high key, when suddenly—yes, startlingly so—the whistle blew with such a long, deafening, over-powerful, ear-splitting sound that, the very ship vibrating, a cannon would scarcely have been heard. My friend was saying: "Do you——" when a most helpless expression overspread his face; he endeavored to finish the sentence, until, discouraged, his lips ceased to move and he stood looking at me as if stricken with palsy. It was eleven o'clock; those not booked for the trip had

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far beyond range, and asked a bystander if the white object was the Sun Building; when told that it was the White Elephant she looked incredulous but finally considered it worthy to make a note of. At noon we were at sea, and a cold sea it was on that Thursday, the last day of January.

After gazing thoughtfully, almost sadly, at the last landmarks, which seemed to wave their fond adieus as they disappeared from sight, one naturally devoted his attention to his immediate surroundings. My friend the Columbia professor had a state-room on the upper deck, and I found him, satchel in hand, mounting aloft and looking in vain for his number on the state-room doors in the vicinity of the smoke-stacks. He was directed downward and investigated the next deck, the promenade deck, and still did not find his number. Finally he wandered down to the saloon deck where I was located and saw a sign at the head of the stairway pointing downward: "Zum obern deck." He has a



"HE HAD A STATE-ROOM ON THE UPPER DECK, AND I FOUND HIM . . . MOUNTING ALOFT."



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## *A Midwinter Cruise*

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happy faculty of seeing the ludicrous and remarked that the decks must have been named when the ship was upside down. He seemed never to become accustomed to going down when he was supposed to go up, for every down-stairs, he observed, is marked as leading to upper something.

The sea was smooth; I overheard some one say there was no sea, but this I could hardly believe. At one o'clock the first luncheon was served; it was a solemn, uncomfortable repast, every one staring at his neighbor opposite without the least sign of cordiality and eating as if he had come aboard for that express purpose; yet with many one could imagine an uncertainty in this preoccupation as if he were not quite sure of his power of endurance. Then there was the usual donning of golf caps, yachting caps and various head coverings; together with ulsters of many shapes and colors, indicating more or less the taste and social environment of the wearer. At four o'clock a long table was

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## *The American Tropics*

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spread on the lee deck, which was also the sunny side of the ship, and tea, coffee, sandwiches and sweets were served. Soon the evening sun sank into his watery bed on our right—we were steaming southeast. After dinner, which was served at seven o'clock, the air was milder so that when walking on deck an overcoat was not needed. There was a choppy sea, but with a reputed steady boat of 12,000 tons no discomfort was felt by the ship's crew, and even some of the passengers were present to hear the Captain's speech at dinner. A truthful report of the effort would not describe it as highly brilliant, nor was its effect enhanced by finding expression in English, since it was very evident that the Captain was not born to that tongue. However the incident was not looked upon with disfavor, and the speaker was more obviously relieved than were his auditors when the duty was disposed of.

An arrangement previously made with the bath steward for 6:45 a. m. proved almost

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## *A Midwinter Cruise*

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superfluous, as the port-hole in my room was in the ceiling over my bed and leading to the promenade deck. Of course it was open and promptly at four o'clock I was deluged by a stream of water intended to wash the deck—but I am fond of sea-water. Besides it gave me an early opportunity to note that it was several degrees warmer than in New York the morning before.

The second day out, the first of February, was mild, moist, with patches of rain. The sea continued choppy. We were off Hatteras, but far to the eastward. The sea-gulls which had followed us had disappeared with the night.

On the third day it was warmer with a gentle rolling sea, and at night the stars shone out with unwonted lustre. Orion was the most familiar constellation on account of his bejewelled sword-hilt and belt, but Sirius was the most bewitching gem of the heavens. The North Star and the Dipper were



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## *The American Tropics*

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nearer the horizon. Our general direction continued southeast.

The fourth day marked an epoch in ship life. The officers appeared in white duck, and the lowest of deck-hands donned a white suit, or at least a straw hat. This latter embellishment was often grotesque and transformed the traditional Jack-tar into the conventional harvest hand of an American farm. With this official transformation, he who had not brought along at least a white cap and his last year's summer suit presented a sorry spectacle. My mind was occupied in devising a suitable means of revenge on the person who settled my wavering mind on leaving by saying "By all means take along a steamer rug."

But in this soft, seductive air revengeful thoughts make little headway. It was easier to lean over the railing and look at the beautiful indigo blue of the water, watching the spray from the ship spread out like white lace-work on the silken surface as we moved along. The sea was al-

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## *A Midwinter Cruise*

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most flat and glassy, while gently rolling, producing undulations like the breathing of the huge monster that it is. Apparently there were many new arrivals this morning. The deck chairs were nearly all occupied. The woman from the Far West—or some other direction equally significant—who sat opposite had come to life, although showing the withering effects of a sea voyage to one not yet immune. As the day wore on and the surface of the deep settled to a more stable, more horizontal condition, hope revived in many a breast and the erstwhile silent were heard again. Fields of sea-weed could now be seen; such observation, you remember, cheered the faltering spirits of Columbus's men on his first voyage. Only three ships had been sighted since leaving Sandy Hook. It was so warm at eleven o'clock that the mere exertion of writing made one perspire. The whole environment was soothing, sensuous, delightful; some one was improvising on the piano, and the vague melody bore

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## *The American Tropics*

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one's thoughts away to the Isles of Balm.

During the first two days we were in communication with the Marconi station at Cape Cod and New York, but now we were beyond the reach of news from the outside world. My friend the Columbia professor remarked that the line of the horizon seemed more circumscribed and the earth's plane smaller; so our observations being confined to a limited area the minutest details of the ship-world assumed proportionate importance. Gossip replaced the daily paper. The wonderful mysteries which surrounded us passed unheeded, however, by a very large number, who buried themselves in books covered with printers' ink, or more apathetically whiled away the time with cards. It has often occurred to me as strange that more people do not prefer to enjoy luxurious loafing at home, instead of subjecting themselves to the many annoyances of travel, when apparently they derive so little from it.

The only serious duty of the day, after

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## *A Midwinter Cruise*

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taking a smart trot and a ride of a few miles on the camel in the gymnasium, was to procure tickets for the land excursions. Here, too, I heard some one remark that he was all at sea. But none of us realized how completely we were adrift until we took up the subject of these excursions and endeavored to determine something definite concerning them. The printed circulars were assuring, of course, and held out attractions not heretofore offered, but old travelers are wary of excursions of all kinds; so the Columbia professor, the doctor, and myself selected only those which, from our lack of definite data as to trains, we felt compelled to choose in order to be sure of re-embarkation. To be left, Crusoe-like, on an island with a Carib population is a situation not especially pleasant to contemplate. To tarry longer than exigencies required in the unsettled states which compose the Spanish mainland seemed scarcely judicious—so we erred, if err we did, on the side of safety.

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## *The American Tropics*

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As the day wore on and the sun neared the water-line, the clouds took on at first a golden then a reddish-purple tint, which changed to the most peculiar greenish color. It was the first time I had ever seen green clouds. They were not confined to any particular part of the heavens, but were general, although most massed towards the horizon and most marked in the east opposite the sunset glow. We stood watching them slowly roll and change into various forms, all tinted with a rainbow green. The effect lasted until nightfall.

The ship presented now her full complement of passengers, some of them very much in evidence. With land ahead and the bulletin's announcement that breakfast would be served at six in the morning and that immediately thereafter we were to land, no chair at dinner was vacant. I resolved to rise early for the distant view of St. Thomas, and to catch a glimpse of the first land seen since leaving the Atlantic Highlands, but





AT ST. THOMAS HARBOR.

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## *A Midwinter Cruise*

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my resolutions went awry and I was not on deck until we had dropped anchor in the beautiful amphitheatre-like harbor of Charlotte Amalia, about a mile from shore. We were welcomed by a self-appointed reception committee which surrounded our ship in small boats of various shapes and sizes. The nominal occupation of these native boatmen is landing passengers, but as we were towed ashore by our own steam launches in the ship's boats, they were left to other devices, mainly diving for coins thrown from our decks. They certainly were expert swimmers and seldom allowed a coin to reach a very great depth before overtaking it. As they wore no clothing worth mentioning, and as they did not trust their companions, each one, immediately on reaching the surface, deposited the coin in his mouth for safe-keeping. The cheeks of some of the more successful in time bulged out to the storied aldermanic fullness. As the first representatives of the Islands of the Blest they attracted



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## *The American Tropics*

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keen interest. One usually detects more of the African than the American in their physiogomies and there is so marked a divergence from any definite type that, with their color, which varies from mahogany to ebony, they readily revealed their mixed or mongrel origin.

The town of Charlotte Amalia, popularly called St. Thomas, the only one of any importance on the island, is built on three hills, the general surface of the land sloping upward from the sea and finally merging into the mountainous interior. The island is thirteen miles long, with an average width of only three miles. To the right as you enter stands Bluebeard's Castle surmounting a dome-shaped hill. The central hill is graced by the gray form of Blackbeard's Castle. The hill to the left is near the docks and seems to be given up to modern structures of more utility. The town with its picturesque environment is charming and as we approached the landing the dark-skinned

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## *A Midwinter Cruise*

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officials attired in white duck presented a natty appearance. They were courteous, as was the population, which turned out to see us.

I was surprised to find English spoken. In fact it seemed to be the prevailing tongue, although the official language is Danish. It is somewhat of a national disgrace to us that the island of St. Thomas belongs to Denmark. The air is humid, with rain clouds passing at frequent intervals.

It seemed quite unnecessary to take a carriage, so we engaged the services of a young man to conduct us about the town. When one has the time and strength it is better to walk, as many opportunities are thus afforded of coming in contact with the people and of observing a thousand and one things that in driving might pass unnoticed. Our guide, attired in an immaculate white duck suit with patent leather shoes, was twenty-two, unmarried, black as a Nubian, but without the negro's features. Moreover,

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## *The American Tropics*

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he was educated, spoke understandingly, though guardedly, of the "Swettenham affair" when asked if he had heard of it, and seemed eager to conduct us to the cable office to read the latest bulletins. We plied him with all sorts of questions as we sauntered along, and gathered, no doubt, an amazing lot of misinformation, ranging in subject from pickaninnies to pomegranates, and from religion to the revenue of the island. Although not what one might truthfully call a walking encyclopedia, he seemed especially well versed in local mythology and appeared unduly eager to conduct us to Bluebeard's castle; but we found the streets leading thereto so full of life (every woman seemed to have a new baby which she carried astride on her hip) and the Columbia professor became so hopelessly absorbed in the artistic ensemble and so interested in the flora offering on all sides abundant opportunities for study, that naturally our progress was retarded. The doctor, too,

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## *A Midwinter Cruise*

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who was rear guard at the time, had certain well matured proclivities accenting a penchant for obtaining information direct from its fountain source. So when the guide slackened his pace he was asked, without any warning, something like this: "Will you kindly elucidate more in extenso the present trend of popular political thought?" Before he could reply his questioner continued: "Did the consensus of opinion acquiesce in the proposed transfer of allegiance from Denmark to the United States?" The only immediate visible effect on the guide was the wilting of his collar, although when we dispensed with his services he demanded an extra amount, which we promptly paid.

The view from the round tower of Bluebeard's Castle is imposing; it commands the spacious harbor, the headlands in the distance, as also the town with its red-tiled roofs and the surrounding country. Around the Castle are numerous pieces of cannon of various shapes and sizes, all showing age

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## *The American Tropics*

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and deteriorated by rust. They belong to the old buccaneer days. Many of them stand upright like posts; as to whether or not they were thus placed to mark the last resting place of Bluebeard's seven wives we did not obtain authentic information.

It is said that an underground passage formerly existed connecting this stronghold with that of Blackbeard, a brother pirate on a neighboring hill less than a mile distant and just beyond the center of the town. Adjoining is the white stone villa of the Italian consul, with its beautiful garden. February is spring-time here and many of the flowers were just in bloom. A more charming home would be hard to find than this luxuriously embedded, though simple, cottage, looking down on an indigo sea. We did not call at the American consulate, but those who did reported that they found a cultivated negro family. Doubtless a more appropriate appointment and one fitter to blend with the environment than would be one involving a

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## *A Midwinter Cruise*

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pitch-fork senator with Swettenham proclivities.

Particularly interesting were the tropical plants and trees, their green foliage and bright flowers harmonizing with the delicate reds, greens and blues of the buildings, all soft in subdued light, but lighting up with a blaze of glory in the bright sunshine; the castor bean with its broad, dark-green palmate-peltate leaves, growing to a height of from eight to ten feet; small trees of pomegranate with their beautiful red trumpet-shaped flowers and their round apple-like fruit; the sweet-smelling thorned acacia, with here and there a gooseberry tree, its light green fruit clinging fungus-like from its branches. The fruit we were told would not be ripe until June. Stately, broad-limbed mahogany trees, giant trees and others as imposing, overhung the broad avenue along which we passed. Of course there were majestic palms which seemed as natural to the place as camels to the desert—date palms,

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## *The American Tropics*

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cocoanut palms, and another which was pointed out as the mountain cabbage palm. A species of locust, the carob-tree, with its long, tongue-like pods, was also very plentiful and presented a striking appearance. It is known here as woman's tongue tree, probably because Moses is supposed to have used the pods in sweetening the bitter waters of Marah. "O for a thousand tongues to tell;" and here they were—women's tongues, too!

Abutting a small park stands a hospital of two stories and beyond, in a narrow street, a school was in busy session. We had previously passed a Roman Catholic school in connection with the church, but here was a counterpart of the little red school house with its young woman teacher, having the traditional birch resting across her lap. It looked so promising as a source of information that one of us proposed that we enter. The building is situated slightly back from the street, and, like many structures in warm countries, has an open front, so that our en-

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## *A Midwinter Cruise*

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trance, camera in hand, was less formal than it might seem to be. Teacher and taught were black, or at least of a rich mahogany color. A reading class of the larger boys was reciting, and, standing where I could look over a boy's shoulder, I was able to follow them as they in turn stood up and read. It was difficult to understand on account of their peculiar intonation. On the street and when by themselves they use what is called "flat English," a patois which makes it more difficult for them to conform to even the simple diction of an English first reader. An especially interesting feature to us was the teaching of less advanced classes by older boys who looked more like miniature slave-drivers with their inevitable birches than embryos in pedagogy. Aside from the rod as a means of enforcing discipline, an expedient was adopted which I had never before seen: that of standing the pupil on the floor before the whole school with his eyes shut. With three hundred and fifty pale-



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## *The American Tropics*

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faced and much clothed tourists in town, and the arrival of two war-ships in the harbor firing salutes, no wonder the row of six miscreants who stood surreptitiously blinking at us felt the punishment most keenly, for it seemed more dreaded than the rod. We were told that the teacher received forty dollars a month and that attendance at school was compulsory, a fine of ten cents a day being imposed for absence between the ages of seven and thirteen.

The merchants, especially the post-card and photograph shop-keepers, did a thriving trade while we were in town. They were most courteous and liberal in their dealings so far as I could see. An instance will suffice: one of my friends, though inured to metropolitan life, became so provincialized by the quiet indolence and familiar faces of the long voyage, that in the throng of the shopping street and in the momentous process of selecting post-cards he departed tranquilly, leaving his camera on the counter. In time,

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## *A Midwinter Cruise*

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wishing to use it, he became aware of its absence, and, retracing his steps, found it just as he had left it. Fortunately we did not encounter any green goods men or exploiters of native gold bricks.

Formerly sugar cane was largely cultivated, but with the abolition of slave labor in 1848 this industry subsided. Bay rum is made here in large quantities and it is of superior quality. The grazing of cattle is said to be one of the main industries. The island is not especially fertile, nor are its people overburdened with wealth, as in the good old buccaneer days.

Yet with its healthfulness, its climate and its transcendent beauty, it is in truth one of the Islands of the Blest. O happy, peaceful Charlotte Amalia, queen of the summer sea!

“Where cocoas grow, and mangoes,  
And groves of feathery palm,  
And nightingales sing all night long  
To roses breathing balm.”

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## *The American Tropics*

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investigate the hilarity following the imbibing of a few bottles of schaumwein. It was said that the sun-cured, salt-dried old Captain of this staid Kaiserliche ship looked surprised at his reception and said: "Lady, you embarrass me." But none of these little eccentricities occurred after the smart set organized "The Knights of the Southern Cross," whose ostensible object was watching, from the hurricane deck, this beautiful constellation rise from its watery bed at midnight and project its holy emblem over a sin-cursed world. Aside from these various types which at least lent the charm of variety, the individual who must do something was in evidence. His activities took the form of raising a subscription and collecting a fund for the stokers and other employees of the Kaiserlicheamerikanischepackbootactiengesellschaft, whose duties did not necessarily compel the passengers to pay their salaries.

The run from St. Thomas to San Juan





MODERN MERCHANDISING IN PORTO RICO.

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## *A Midwinter Cruise*

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takes five hours, but with luncheon and distant headlands to occupy one's attention, we were steering along the coast of Porto Rico before we realized it. Then the frowning old fortress loomed up in the distance. It seemed strange to see the American flag floating from this old Spanish stronghold. With our glasses we could see soldiers in khaki suits walking about on the ramparts. To the right on a rocky island is a whitish building which I afterwards learned is the Leper Hospital (with twenty-eight inmates), admirably situated for an isolation hospital; then we rounded El Morro and entered the broad harbor or bay where numerous craft lazily basked in the evening sun. Yes, we were at Porto Rico. How often of late years when our eyes beheld the name had we endeavored to picture with the mind's eye some vague outlines of its appearance! San Juan stands high on a bluff with an undulating surface extending upward and backward from the sea. On the opposite side

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## *The American Tropics*

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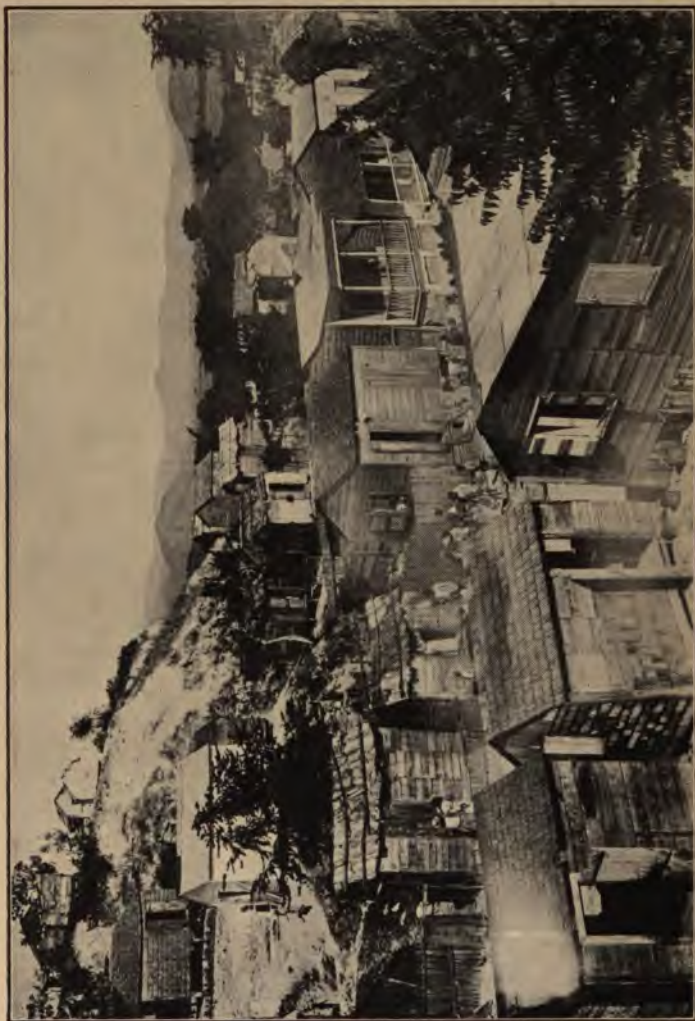
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of the bay one can make out wooded lowlands, backed by the serrated outline of mountains. The band struck up "America," while the ship stirred up the mud; in fact, there was an impression that we were stuck in the mud, but this was an error, for after changing her position, as if to rest more comfortably, the engines ceased throbbing and the anchor dropped.

The town is built mainly of masonry in the old Spanish style, the buildings abutting the sidewalk, the streets narrow. More people live in the business section than is common in American cities. Few glazed windows are seen except in the more modern houses in the suburbs. Wooden shutters are used instead, and during the evening these are thrown open showing the family sitting, reading or entertaining apparently as unconscious of being observed as if they were in the seclusion of a castle with portcullis and moat. In fact the contrast between a San Juan dwelling with its front thrown open







IN THE SUBURBS OF PORTO RICO.

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## *A Midwinter Cruise*

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directly on the street and the walled privacy of an English house is most striking.

Life is less strenuous here than in an American city, but people seem to get along quite as well and get as much enjoyment from life as we do. Naturally, the change from Spanish to American regime made a certain amount of uncertainty inevitable, and society may now be considered still unsettled. The older people who had regal privileges and emoluments must feel the difference with disappointment. A comparatively small number, I imagine, are thus affected, while the younger generation and some of the more intelligent of the people less favored by fortune, are glad of the change. The majority of the islanders are probably now dominated less by priests than by politicians, who, like weeds in new-tilled ground, if not discouraged at the root, grow faster for the upheaval. Neither is the promoter conspicuous by his absence, and one hears of schemes promising large returns and

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investments paying a high rate of usury. The island seems to be prosperous, but its greatest hope for the future lies in the well-equipped schools—and there are many in San Juan and Ponce—established by the American government. Spanish is the language used, but English is taught and many of the younger people make some attempt at speaking it.

The streets in San Juan not only serve as roadways, but they, with the parks and squares, are places of meeting. Everything is in plain view, the shops show all their wares, and the band plays in the plazas Sunday afternoons and on certain evenings. It seemed strange on inquiring one's way of a policeman wearing the United States army uniform and armed with a club and pistol to find that he spoke no English. I was told that some of the people object to having the streets thus patrolled by policemen who are in fact United States soldiers. "We have always gotten along without them," they say,

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## *A Midwinter Cruise*

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“and why not now?” It would not be difficult to find men, and women, too, in any of our cities in the north who would make the same plea for untrammelled license. Aside from the street life, the old Spanish forts, the Governor’s palace and Casa Blanca, built by Ponce de Leon, are of interest to the tourist.

El Morro stands on a promontory overlooking the sea and has a most picturesque setting. We obtained permission to go through the forts and were given a soldier who seemed equally unfamiliar with both retreat and English, so we were compelled to go the entire rounds, entering dungeons, descending into moats and mounting towers until we were unfit for further duty the rest of the day. In several languages, including that of signs, we asked him to show us out, but he persistently failed to grasp our meaning; on the contrary, it seemed invariably to remind him of some remote keep or tower he had overlooked and thought we

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## *The American Tropics*

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wished to see. We were finally shown out and were driven to Fort San Cristobal, but we contented ourselves with photographing the gate and the policeman on guard; we had no desire to be shown through.

The Governor's Palace is likewise beautifully situated, overlooking the harbor and the sea. At present it is the residence of General Magoon. It was carnival time and a masked ball at the National Theatre was the attraction of the evening, but the Fort had made such a lasting impression on us that we preferred to stay at home and watch the rockets and illumination from the ship. It is strange how quickly one develops a home feeling for a ship!

The next morning, rain, and the wettest rain one could imagine; but we had tickets for the land excursion and visited a sugar factory at Carolina, an old town an hour by train from San Juan. The trolley line takes one far into the country. This trip with a short drive on the far-famed Military Road



ONE OF THE FINEST, PORTO RICO.



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## *A Midwinter Cruise*

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which leads across the mountains to Ponce completed our work for the day. Of course the vegetation is tropical, but left more or less in a wild state—which is also tropical. The soil is black and seems very productive. Sugar-cane and bananas are most generally cultivated. Coffee and tobacco are also grown—in fact the former gives employment to twenty per cent. of the inhabitants of the island. We saw some large plantations of cocoanut trees. The average yield is about a hundred to a hundred and twenty nuts per tree, which harvest sells for about a dollar. The trees begin to bear at the age of seven years. We heard of a plantation with 37,000 trees, giving a revenue of \$37,000 a year—we wondered if it were so.

This was really the first good opportunity to shop and many of us bought souvenirs of drawn linen, laces and hats. Not that the hats were any better than could be procured at any other place, but the weather was warm and what is lighter than some varieties of



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## *The American Tropics*

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Porto Rican straw? Then, those who had forgotten to bring along summer clothing or had been served with a misfit at St. Thomas had an opportunity of trying again at San Juan. We liked Porto Rico and were loath to leave it; but we hope to return, although Americans who had been there a long time said we would soon tire of it; there is so little variety and one grows weary even of the glorious sunshine.

A more perfect morning would be difficult to imagine than Thursday, the seventh of February. I arose betimes and breakfasted before the echo of the bugle call had penetrated the various fastnesses of the ship, and at half-past eight was seated, field-glass and camera in hand, on the hurricane deck, when the mud-clogged anchor was drawn up on the forecastle deck and we swung gracefully northward and put to sea. El Morro stood out proudly in the clear air and never flinched as a hundred cameras clicked a parting shot at its gray walls—needless to say

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## *A Midwinter Cruise*

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it was taken many times over, whatever honorable record it may have had in the past.

All day there was a strong trade wind from the south-east which stirred up the white-caps; on shipboard no noticeable effect was produced, except that the temperature was made more agreeable. Our course was southeast. We passed St. Croix, discovered by Columbus on his second voyage in 1493, to our starboard side about three o'clock in the afternoon, near enough to see the town of Christiansted, in which could be made out two churches, three or four smoke stacks from sugar factories, and, on the hills beyond, what appeared to be water towers. Through our glasses the buildings looked clean, as if recently built, although this probably was an optical delusion. St. Croix or Santa Cruz belongs to Denmark. The general outline of the island is hilly. Blue Mountain (1,100 feet) near the center is the highest peak. It is twenty-three miles long and six miles across at its widest part. It

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## *The American Tropics*

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lies forty miles south-east of St. Thomas. Other islands were passed to our port, or left, notably St. Kitts (British), but so far away that we were able to discern only the general outlines of smoky mountains. In some parts it is said to be very fertile. It contains about sixty-eight square miles and has about 30,000 inhabitants. It was discovered by Columbus, who named it after his patron saint, St. Christopher.

At about eleven o'clock in the evening the two upper stars of the Southern Cross were visible, and at midnight the whole constellation stood out plainly above the water line. I gazed long and thoughtfully, recalling the time I had first seen the Cross at Orizaba in southern Mexico. The North Star and the Dipper could be seen in the opposite direction about four degrees from the horizon. We were within seventeen degrees of the equator.

The following morning at dawn we found ourselves opposite Dominica (British). Mt.



THE ASTRONOMY CLASS.



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## *A Midwinter Cruise*

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Diablotin (Little Devil) was fast asleep, his head buried in a pillow of clouds or noxious sulphur fumes. A good view could be obtained of the island's clear-cut, rugged outline, and later the sun lit up the verdant slopes and revealed its shaded ravines and dark chasms. It is twenty miles long by sixteen at its widest part, and contains about two hundred and ninety-one square miles. Besides the distinction of having the highest mountain (5,314 ft.) in the whole chain of the Lesser Antilles, it also has the proud distinction of being the home—the last home—of the once powerful race of Carib Indians, who disputed inch by inch the followers of Columbus in their march of extermination. They inhabited the islands of the Caribbean Sea as well as the northern coast of the South American continent, which was later called the Spanish Main (land).

It may be further said that these natives did not appreciate in the highest sense the mis-

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## *The American Tropics*

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sionary methods of the sixteenth century, but gave an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth, so to speak, with fair success until the introduction of measles, which proved to be a weapon their susceptible bodies were unable to withstand. In exchange tobacco was introduced into Europe, but apparently with less deadly results. The Carib settlement is on the windward or Atlantic side of the Island, but of the millions existing at the time of Columbus's discovery only a few hundred of this proud race remain of pure Caribbean blood. A boiling lake, due to volcanic disturbances, is situated about two thousand feet above sea level and is one of the attractions of Sabbath Island.

At nine o'clock the hazy, bluish-purple of Mont Pelee (4,500 ft.) could be made out ahead. As we neared the island of Martinique, a French possession, the sun became so hot on the hurricane deck that without the strong trade wind it would have been almost unbearable. At first the peak of Mont Pelee

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## *A Midwinter Cruise*

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was hidden in cloudland, but as we came alongside one could see what appeared to be steam issuing from various crevices near the summit. Then we passed opposite and sufficiently near to see distinctly the huge gorge formed by the rushing waters of the volcanic lake, La Soufriere, liberated on the eventful morning of May 5th, as a prelude to the more eventful morning of May 8th, 1902. No vestige could be seen of the prosperous sugar mill which was situated near the shore in the track of this formidable torrent.

It was a sublime, awe-inspiring spectacle. Ahead with our glasses the low walls of St. Pierre could be made out. I knew a volcanic eruption had devastated the prosperous city, but I was unprepared for the total oblivion which had been wrought in about three minutes of that awful day, when thousands of people lay scorched or smothering beneath the hot ashes. The scene was one of complete desolation and only the white forms of a few tourists, whose yacht lay anchored



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## *The American Tropics*

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near the shore, could be seen crawling like ants over the crumbling walls already green with a luxuriant vegetation of less than five years. On landing in small boats on an extemporized wharf, we were brought in immediate contact with and could appreciate more vividly, the effect of this cataclysm of nature. The city of St. Pierre occupied a plain but slightly elevated above the sea, extending backward less than a mile, and not more than twice this distance along the coast. Surrounding are high hills and mountains, some of the former green with sugar cane although not a habitation was in sight. To the left, about nine or ten miles away, the cloud-capped volcano of Pelee arose in majestic grandeur. Little effort has been made at rehabilitation. A few of the streets have been cleared and show the square stone pavement, gutters and narrow sidewalks. The houses stood directly on the street, compactly built of brick, cobblestones and mortar. Near the beach the warehouses stood, and the



PELÉE AND RUINS OF MARTINIQUE.



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## *A Midwinter Cruise*

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square block pavement extends to the water's edge. Here and there are large iron rings for the mooring of ships, together with posts, made by sinking the breech ends of cannon barrels into the earth. The latter serve as firmer fastenings for larger craft. Even of the larger buildings few retain any features by which they may be recognized. The Cathedral, however, presents a facade comprising the arched doorway and a portion of the outer walls. The Jardin des Plantes is buried under cinders and overgrown with rank vegetation. No trees are left, but here and there a half-burned trunk tells of the intense heat which accompanied the downfall of ashes, cinders and stones. The story of the eruption was told by but few eye-witnesses, because but few survived. Mont Pelee had the habit of acting queerly at times, but not for a life-time had any eruption occurred sufficiently serious to endanger the inhabitants of St. Pierre.

For some weeks the mountain had been

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## *The American Tropics*

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wearing his smoke-cap and there had been strange tremors of the earth. This increased from day to day and the volcano threw out steam and huge volumes of dust, but not until May 5th was there anything to cause alarm. On that day there was a tremendous explosion, accompanied by the eruption of vast quantities of steam, smoke, mud and cinders, followed by the on-rushing waters of La Soufriere which had been liberated and bore everything before them, furrowing a huge gorge down the mountain side to the sea. Of a hundred and twenty men employed at the sugar factory at the time, including the owner's son, not one escaped and not a vestige of the mill was left.

This quite naturally aroused the people of St. Pierre and a commission of local scientists was sent to the seat of disturbance, as near the summit as they could go. Returning, they reported that the inhabitants had nothing to fear, that the worst was over. While there was great perturbation among

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## *A Midwinter Cruise*

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dwellers in the whole north end of the island and many thought of flight, yet through the assurance of some of the less cautious and by the publication of notices in the newspaper, stating that there was nothing to fear and encouraging them to pursue the even tenor of their way, most of the inhabitants of St. Pierre remained, together with many who had sought refuge in the town. While these disturbances continued at intervals, a picnic was arranged for the 8th of May to make the ascent of the mountain—needless to say it never occurred.

At this time there were many boats of various kinds at anchor in the roadstead; one of these, an Italian steamer, was taking on a cargo of sugar. Her Captain, familiar with the Vesuvian eruptions, became alarmed by the increasing violence of Pelee and asked for his clearing papers. These were refused by the port officers, who would not permit his departure until the cargo had been taken aboard. He threatened to sail without them,

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## *The American Tropics*

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whereupon two officers were sent to detain him. It was then four o'clock on the afternoon of May 7th, and but half a cargo was aboard. Finally he informed the officers that he would sail before sunset; if they wished to go ashore this was their opportunity; if not he would take them along. Seeing his determination they went ashore. Far at sea he did not hear of the appalling disaster, the greatest that has ever befallen the American continent, but learned it upon reaching Italy a fortnight or more later.

The next morning, May 8th, 1902, the sun was obscured by smoke and volcanic dust; a thunder-storm on Pelee with vivid lightning added to the impression of impending doom. At eight o'clock there was a tremendous explosion which shook the earth and someone cried out: "Mont Pelee has blown his head into the sky!" What else was said no man knows, for almost with the rapidity of sound the blast of heat, dust, cinders and molten rocks struck the town, and of its

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## *A Midwinter Cruise*

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30,000 people but two were afterwards seen alive: an aged woman who happened to be in an underground room or cellar, and who died some few weeks later from exposure and neglect, and a criminal confined in a dungeon, who was liberated by a rescuing party and subsequently exhibited himself in various American cities. All but two of the ships were burned or sunk by the impact. The commander of one of the ships that escaped was standing on the bridge when the eruption occurred. He saw a cloud of fire sweeping from the mountain side and made an effort to escape by rushing inside the chart house. An instant later, before he had time to shut the door and windows, the blast struck his ship, careening and nearly swamping her with burning cinders. He was almost smothered, his hands and face were badly burned and many members of the crew who were exposed were killed outright. Only those in closed rooms escaped the effect of the blistering heat. With a few of those who



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## *The American Tropics*

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were able to respond to his orders, the ship's cables were slipped and he signalled for full steam ahead. Fortunately three or four in the engine room were not seriously disabled and after some delay in freeing the steering gear, they succeeded in clearing the roadstead and in seven hours reached the harbor of Castris on the northern coast of St. Lucia, about sixty miles to the south. The captain and surviving sailors were found so badly burned on arriving at the port that they were sent to the hospital, and more than one hundred tons of ashes were removed from the ship, showing the imminent peril to which they had been exposed—only by the most prompt and heroic action were they saved from destruction. Sad indeed was the spectacle—and how changed the gay creole city, once the delight of all who knew her! Not mountain's roar, thought I, nor hail of fire henceforth will terrify your lightsome heart—for dead and buried beneath six feet

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## *A Midwinter Cruise*

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of ashes overgrown with green lies St. Pierre.

As the sun went down, fatigued with climbing over fallen walls, we struck out on a narrow footpath, thinking it led to the beach, but finding ourselves threading our way through dense vegetation, some apprehension was felt lest the deadly yellow viper, the fere de lance, might be encountered. Just as our courage was beginning to wane, the gentle swash of waves was heard ahead. A few steps and our ship stood out huge and black, silhouetted against the bright twilight of the western sky.

Steaming along the coast southward the lights of Fort de France were soon glimmering near the water's edge. The following morning, anchored in the open bay, our ship was surrounded by the usual flotilla of small craft with chattering, dusky occupants. At a glance one could see the effect of the more intimate mingling of races, Negro, Indian and Caucasian, than is seen in the north, or

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## *The American Tropics*

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even in the British West Indies. In more than ninety per cent., I was told, negro blood predominates. Few had even a suggestion of clothing, an abandon also not tolerated in most communities. While their wants are few yet they have a keen thirst for coin which they dived for even to considerable depth. French is the language of the Island, though they garble it into a peculiar patois, which is not readily comprehended by unaccustomed ears. Fort de France, of a few thousand inhabitants, is situated on low land, which during the rainy season must be wet and swampy.

Few are the attractions offered to detain the traveler in the capital city of Martinique. The statue of Josephine, once Empress of the French, stands in the center of a Savane of several acres immediately surrounded by a half dozen tall palms. It was presented to the people of Martinique by her grandson, Napoleon III, and is a beautifully executed piece of white marble representing

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## *A Midwinter Cruise*

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the wife of the great Napoleon in the full flush of womanhood attired in a costume of the time. She is looking away from the town southward across the ridge of hills to a spot some five miles away where on the 23rd of June, 1763, she was born. The sucrerie, in which, after the destruction of the "Grande Maison" by the hurricane of 1776, she lived is still shown and even the house in which she was born is pointed out, although some doubt as to the verity of the association must be entertained. The statue seemed to be somewhat out of place and the more I saw of the town and its people the stronger the impression grew. As a race it must have degenerated during the past century and a half. Creoles there are still and some not devoid of physical charm, yet it is essentially a negro population with the African rapidly gaining the ascendancy. It is estimated that fully sixty per cent. of the births are illegitimate.

It was mid-day as we wandered through

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## *The American Tropics*

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the narrow streets, past the attractive library building, to the post-office, which was closed for its noonday siesta, so we were directed to a green-grocer's opposite to buy postage stamps. The Cathedral was open but empty, and the only feature of note was its hurricane-proof spire made of open iron work. The market was alive with people, women with huge baskets on their heads, gossiping, and men bartering or seeking the shade. Donkeys laden and children playing in the street completed a picturesque gathering which, in the eternal sunshine, appeared truly Ovest Indienne.



STREET AND CATHEDRAL, FORT DE FRANCE.



### CHAPTER III

ONE hundred and forty miles as the pelican flies or as the trade-wind blows and you come to the most thickly populated island in the world, Barbadoes, which stands out in the Atlantic farthest to the eastward like a bulwark protecting this great island chain. Leaving Martinique at nightfall we took a southeasterly course and at day-break the following morning entered Carlisle Bay and dropped anchor less than a mile from Bridgetown. The island is less mountainous than those we had previously seen, having only a very few low mountains, more hills, and for the most part an undulating surface. It comprises an area of one hundred and sixty-six miles, most of which is under cultivation, and has a population of 200,000, or about 1,200 to the square mile. Bridge-



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## *The American Tropics*

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town, the capital and chief emporium, has about 35,000 people. Barbadoes belongs to Great Britain and, were it not for the African complexion of the inhabitants, would seem more British than does Britain herself.

On landing one is impressed by the white-coated, white-helmeted mounted policemen, and the 'igh 'atted cab drivers in a livery of dark material ornamented with gilt buttons, just as one sees them in Piccadilly or Hyde Park, except that the ensemble shows the effect of wear and weather of many seasons. The landing of three hundred and fifty tourists, with the dazzling—almost blinding—sunlight and the mercury just below the boiling point, had a demoralizing effect on the dozen or more cab drivers in waiting. Prices soared to the limit and remained there until our departure. We found, however, strict order maintained. A cabby who could not well bear up under the exciting influence of rum and sudden prosperity, was seen between two sturdy cops,

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## *A Midwinter Cruise*

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shuffled along, noisy and gesticulating, to durance vile.

Almost every one we saw appeared to be doing something. I was told this was compulsory on account of the poverty of the island. There was no evidence of a noon-day siesta; everybody seemed to be leading a strenuous, though simple, life. African as over ninety per cent. of the inhabitants are, they are longer removed from the influences of the jungle than are the blacks of the southern states of America. This seemed the greatest and almost the only safeguard the place possesses, for the representatives of the "mother country" appeared quite unlike the courteous and efficient, though at times distant, Britons of officialdom as seen in most of the capitals of the world. Their lot, if they possess the finer qualities common to their race, must be most depressing in a country of so overwhelmingly African a population.

Farly Hall, the house of the Governor,

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## *The American Tropics*

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presents a pleasing appearance, surrounded by dense tropical foliage ever green, with here and there a flowering shrub or tree of wondrous beauty. In striking contrast to this is the Civil Hospital, which, like the cabs, seemed reduced to the last extremity of existence. Man wants but little here below, however, and especially in Barbadoes where the necessities of life are easily supplied. A congenial climate for the dark-skinned, the bread-fruit tree spreading its broad-leaved branches and growing fruit over the roadway and the cot, thus affording nourishment with the least exertion and a grateful shade to lie in. The chief industry is the cultivation and manufacture of sugar; rum comes next in importance. But the former has declined of late years under the competition of beet-root sugar which is now so generally grown in northern countries; it is said that, as a consequence, the island does not enjoy a very high degree of prosperity. As in Holland wind-mills are utilized for motive





IN THE SHOPPING DISTRICT, BRIDGETOWN.

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power, here they are used in grinding sugar-cane.

The Ice House is the popular rendezvous for tourists in Bridgetown. It is a combination of restaurant, bar and hotel, with its main entrance from a grocery or general store on the ground floor. Its specialties are rum swizzle and flying fish, which might have been more keenly relished but for the excellent larder and immaculate service of "our boat." The fish tasted much like English sole; they were larger than those we saw skimming the water's edge. Yams which tasted like sweet potatoes were also served. It is stated that the manufacture of ice is another of the products of this establishment, but aside from the "swizzle" I neither saw nor felt any suggestion of this department.

Some of Bridgetown's streets are attractive and the dwellings inviting, but there is no evidence of wealth and everything seems to have been handed down from our great-grandfather's time—almost crumbling with

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## *The American Tropics*

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age. One must bear in mind that the island was settled by the English (not their best specimens in numerous instances) long before American cities had passed the log-cabin stage. Codrington College, founded over two hundred years ago, is to "Bimshire" what Oxford is to England, and supplies to the "Bims" of scholastic bent the means of acquiring a fairly liberal education. There is at least one thing which might be adopted in some communities with profit—the abolition of that farce, a jury trial, which so often places legal proceedings in America in a bad light. Two magistrates determine the case here, and I believe with more equity than obtains under the jury system.

As the sun neared the western horizon we felt that we had had a full day. From the deck we watched the huge fire-ball approach the water line, sink below it, then came an afterglow of a few minutes and it was night—

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## *A Midwinter Cruise*

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"The sun's rim dips; the stars rush out:  
At one stride comes the dark."

It was reported that a young lady of our ship had been prostrated by the heat while riding in the country, and although the attack proved to be not serious, it reminded us, if such reminder were necessary, that we were no longer in the temperate zone. Yes, it was hot; but the faithful trade-wind rendered living in the shade very agreeable. I had long since dispensed with superfluous clothing and at night my only coverlet was the breeze which came from an electric fan. Dressing for dinner now became a serious problem and only by standing in line with the fan could my collar be induced to retain any semblance of respectability.

That night our course was south-west and at 11:20 o'clock the Southern Cross stood just above the sea mist on our port bow. At midnight it was well up and four hours after had almost traveled its visible arc although it did not set until later. At



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## *The American Tropics*

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six o'clock the day was breaking and the dim outline of low mountains or hills could be seen on both sides of the ship, the coast of South America on our starboard bow, and to port some small islands near Trinidad. At sea, morning is the pleasantest time of day, especially in the tropics. I sat on the hurricane deck enjoying the cool north-east trade-wind after a sweltering night in my cabin; no dew was perceptible, all was quiet; the moon was in her last quarter and Jupiter, the morning star, stood out large and bright casting a shimmer on the rippling waves. Ahead on our port side was a light that never fails to guide the mariner into the Dragon's Mouth. A water bird which looked like a crane, flying northward to the open sea, was the only living thing in sight. A speck on the surface of the deep indigo blue ahead proved to be the pilot boat, then a golden halo appeared beyond the blue headlands in the east. It was a quarter after six, the engines ceased throbbing and the ship came to

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## *A Midwinter Cruise*

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a standstill. The pilot, a full-blooded negro with a white cap and linen coat, climbed over the gunwale, the great heart of the ship again began to throb. At half-past six the eastern glow had vanished in the broad light of day; three minutes later the sun peeped above the blue hills of Trinidad and another tropical day began. We had entered the Dragon's Mouth. The time and place recalled the fact that it was also Sunday, Trinity Sunday, on the 31st of July, 1496, that Columbus sighted the island and named it in honor of the day, La Trinidad. Skirting its shores, endeavoring to find a suitable landing, he entered the gulf at its southern opening, the Serpent's Mouth (Boca del Si-erpe); had he approached from the north and attempted to enter the Dragon's Mouth he might not have succeeded on account of the strong currents which render it extremely hazardous for sailing craft.

The Gulf of Paria is of a light, somewhat turbid, green color and the air was hot to a

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## *The American Tropics*

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superlative degree. Fortunately we reached La Brea Point at nine in the morning, thus avoiding the extreme heat of mid-day. Deserted by my companions and receiving but slight encouragement from the guide-books or previous "trippers," yet to me the great Pitch Lake, discovered by that hardy gallant of Queen Elizabeth's Court, Sir Walter Raleigh, was one of the chief attractions of the trip and of sufficient importance to induce me to brave the heat and toil. A walk of a mile, or to be exact 4,000 feet, up an easy grade lined with morning-glories, yellow cassia and white hibiscus, with fields of pineapple growing to perfection, brings one to Pitch Lake, which Kingsley likened to the very fountains of Styx. The walk is over a hard roadway, said to have been formed by the overflow of the lake, although it looked as if it had been made by depositing the pitch in the ordinary way, as no evidence of anything like an overflow could be made out. The lake looks like an ordinary bog or



WALKING ON GREAT PITCH LAKE, TRINIDAD.



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## *A Midwinter Cruise*

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swamp with pools of water and tufts of wild grass, excepting that its surface is hard or nearly so, and upon closer inspection the peculiar formation occasioned by the oozing to the surface of the thick, black bituminous substance can be seen. It covers an area of about a hundred acres and its depth has not been fathomed. Already more than a million tons have been taken from the lake by the present company, yet no impression has been made on the supply. The pitch oozes imperceptibly and keeps the surface nearly level. The workmen engaged in picking it out told me that after removing it all day the excavations thus formed were full the following morning so that one could not see that any had been removed. The supply comes from a bituminous stratum forced upward by the pressure of the superimposed earth and appears to be inexhaustible. Standing on an islet of pitch surrounded by water it looks like numerous cone formations which on reaching the surface flat-

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## *The American Tropics*

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ten and spread out like mushrooms. One is surprised to see tufts of long wild grass growing and even small fish have been seen in the water fissures and pools. In conversation with a negro I was told wages were six cents an hour and board costs from twenty-five to thirty-five cents a day. Work was not constant, which I thought seemed to his liking; he further said that he came from Montserrat and had been working at the Pitch Lake for six months. All the darkies of the West Indies look longingly to the Panama Canal Zone, where wages are higher, as their Eldorado—"But how's yo gwine ter git dar?" was the puzzling question.

Returning to the ship on a choppy sea stirred up by the brisk wind, I did not fully realize the intense heat to which I had been exposed until noticing that my clothing, which was the thinnest procurable, was saturated with perspiration. I had taken the trip leisurely, too, and under a sun umbrella.

At two o'clock we passed the newest and

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## *A Midwinter Cruise*

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largest gun-boat in the British navy, the "Dreadnaught," and in a few minutes were at the chief town of the British possessions in the West Indies, Port of Spain. On account of the shallow water we anchored nearly two miles from shore. Even at this distance we stirred up considerable mud and tub baths were discontinued until we were again on the open sea.

Sunday in Port of Spain is marked by due decorum, as becomes a staid English town. It is not wholly an exemplary place, however, probably on account of its heterogeneous make-up. The electric tram cars were running, and many, especially those who had not visited Pitch Lake in the morning, rode about the town or strolled along the shady walks of the Botanical Gardens and some attended church in the evening. In both the Anglican and Roman Catholic Cathedrals negro choirs furnished the music and naturally black or coffee-colored skins largely predominated in the pews. While the African



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## *The American Tropics*

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race comprises a large majority, yet the inhabitants seemed more cosmopolitan than those of Bridgetown. English, Hindus, South Americans, Chinese, Portuguese, Spanish and a few French were seen. It is said that the two latter fraternize but to a limited extent with those of other nationalities. The East Indians, or coolies, as they are called, live by themselves and apparently within themselves. It is computed that as many as 50,000 or more find employment in Trinidad. They are more industrious and frugal than the African, although not able to perform the feats of strength which the negro occasionally exhibits. The coolies are procured by government agents in India and contract to remain for five years. I was told they receive about a shilling a day, and most of them in the course of four or five years amass a competency which enables them to return to their native land (at the company's expense) and live in comparative affluence thereafter. They are expert gold- and silver-





AVENUE OF PALMS, PORT OF SPAIN.

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## *A Midwinter Cruise*

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smiths and their earnings are put into curiously wrought ornaments such as bracelets, which are worn by the Hindoo women on their arms, wrists and ankles. Necklaces, ear-rings and nose-rings are also worn, together with a button-like stud or rosette which is fastened on the side of the nose. In short the Hindoo lavishes all his wealth on his wife, constituting her his savings bank to draw on should occasion arise.

Some large shops and stores are found in Port of Spain. Here began the first serious outbreak of the Panama hat fever; sporadic cases had been seen at previous ports of call, but not until we reached Trinidad did it amount to an epidemic. At first immunity was conferred by former attacks, but finally it mattered little how many Panama hats one already possessed, he had a desire to possess more, which in some of the more susceptible took on a mild form of delirium. Had quarantine been established early and the affected, or all those already possessing or hav-

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## *The American Tropics*

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ing a marked desire to possess a Panama, been segregated to the aft cabin and poop deck, a general epidemic might have been averted. The most conspicuous infections of Port of Spain occurred in two Southern gentlemen who procured two Panamas for one hundred dollars. Thenceforth they were the pride of the deck. The young woman with ravishing eyes and gorgeous cardinal hat and belt to match was outshadowed—yes, completely outshadowed.

Better than walking in Trinidad, even in midwinter, is riding on an open electric tram. The breeze when the car is in motion is delightful, but when it stands five or ten minutes waiting to pass a car going in the opposite direction as it does at frequent intervals, the heat stimulates every pore in your body into a veritable fountain. Although it was carnival time and the cars were well filled, the conductors were invariably obliging and willing to give information. Nor were they the only ones who were courteous.

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### *A Midwinter Cruise*

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A young man on hearing me ask to be let off at the Governor's Palace volunteered to conduct us, saying it was a short walk beyond the terminus of the car-line. I thanked him, saying I would not put him to such inconvenience. "But I am going that way," he replied, with every evidence of good breeding, and as we were desirous of coming in contact with the better element in the community, we gladly accepted his guidance through the Botanical Garden to the Governor's Palace. Meeting a coolie juggler he had him perform some very clever sleight-of-hand tricks which he afterwards explained to us for a small consideration. Negroes flock around a juggler like flies around a molasses barrel and I could not but remark the striking mental superiority of the East Indian. He exhibited with pride numerous letters of commendation from titled people and others of high degree at whose houses he had furnished entertainment.

Our proffered guide was a native Trini-

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### *The American Tropics*

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dadian, twenty-one, dark, with straight black hair, and was employed in a physician's office. His father came from Venezuela; his mother was a native of Trinidad. He hoped to obtain one of the three or four scholarships given in Port of Spain, which would enable him to secure a complete medical course in London, including living expenses and fees for final examinations. We were more than pleased with him and admired his noble ambition. On asking him to accept a gratuity as a mark of our appreciation he most graciously but modestly declined.

To one interested in the flora of the tropics the Botanical Gardens offer a paradise of variety and rank luxuriance. Here grow the stately palms, the princes of the vegetable kingdom, ever in evidence and of a thousand and one species, furnishing to man a storehouse of utilities such as food, shelter, clothing, timber and fuel, tannin, starch, paper, sugar, oil, wax and wine; mango trees with their dense, glossy foliage and luscious fruit,

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## *A Midwinter Cruise*

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growing to a height of thirty to forty feet; huge wide-spreading silk-cotton or ceiba trees which remind one of live-oaks; noble amhersts (*Amherstia nobilis*) growing to a height of forty to fifty feet, with large bright vermillion flowers spotted with deep yellow; the gorgeous "fire flowers" or poui trees (*Tabebuia Pentaphylla*) with large golden-yellow flowers, the most striking of the giants of the tropical forests, and Traveller's trees with their tall trunks surmounted by a tuft of fan-like leaves (*Urania speciosa*). There were also flowering shrubs and climbing vines, the most conspicuous of the former being the poinsettia with its large deep red stellate flowers. Then again there were names more familiar from their household associations, such as nutmeg trees, which look like small hickories, growing to a height of about fifteen feet (the nuts likewise look like green hickorynuts); cinnamon, clove and coffee trees, the latter about twenty feet in height, with Brazil-nut trees, cannon-ball



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trees, leopard-wood trees and the never-failing bread-fruit tree, its spreading leaves and large fruit resembling green grape-fruit.

Besides the Governor's Palace there are some stately residences facing Queen's Park. On the opposite side of the Park is the hotel. Queen's Park, or the "Savanna," contains about two hundred acres. It is set off by a few fine banyan, saman and giant ceiba trees, together with bamboo clumps and green-sward or wild grass. It is utilized for cricket, golf, horse racing and other forms of recreation. On the day of my visit a fine herd of Jerseys was grazing here. This reminds me that our northern breeds of cattle do not long thrive in the tropics. A peculiar species with a camel-like hump on the withers is used for inbreeding.

Numerous drives over well-kept roads may be taken, the one leading to the reservoir being the most beautiful.

Although the last three days before Lent began on Sunday, it was not until the fol-

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## *A Midwinter Cruise*

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lowing day that King Carnival was given full sway and held in his hand the keys of the municipality. Bands of masked merry-makers in various fantastic garbs marched the streets preceded by music—or what was intended for music. At noon the shops closed and bedlam was let loose. A troop of negro minstrels might be seen marching rapidly with gaudy costumes, their long swallow-tail coats fluttering in their wake. Banjos, guitars and tambourines were most in evidence, with various extemporized instruments, rattle boxes and horns. An Indian chief came boldly up Frederick Street with scarlet paint and feathers, brandishing a tomahawk and bow and arrows, followed by a motley array of nondescripts. Dancing maidens in gay attire with white masks, came at frequent intervals, monsters and men in tar and feathers, harlequins, all day and half the night until one longed for quiet—and found it only on board ship. I was told the better class of inhabitants regretted that custom

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## *The American Tropics*

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allows the rabble to monopolize the first day, after which some of the more refined and gorgeous turnouts may be seen.

On a tram-car, through narrow, dusty, crowded streets, I rode through the coolie village, with the sun temperature 150 degrees Fahrenheit, and alighted at the entrance of the Lazar House—the Leper Asylum of Trinidad. Entering an arched gateway where a negro porter in blue uniform received my card and rang a bell notifying the Sister Superior of my approach, I then came to a park of about six acres; on the opposite side stands a second arched gateway leading to a courtyard of about an acre, shaded by flowering trees and shrubs with a large pump in the center and walled in by different wards of the hospital. Here a second porter conducted me to the reception room opposite the entrance where I registered my name and was met by the Sister Superior.

Segregation of lepers is not compulsory in Trinidad, provided the affected do not

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### *A Midwinter Cruise*

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conspicuously endanger the lives of others either on account of occupation or environment. The Asylum is supported by the government and is presided over by a religious order or sisterhood, most of whose members are French; it has two small churches, an English and a Roman Catholic, one on each side of the administration building. The estate surrounding the hospital furnishes employment to those able to perform light manual labor and is a pleasant diversion in the blank existence of its two hundred and sixty inmates. Neither high stone walls nor the porter at the lodge entrance, however, was able to keep out King Carnival, although his presence was doubtless connived at by the management. A procession of girls and women with masks and tambourines started to cross the court, headed and flanked by some of the nurses, but they all beat a precipitous retreat on seeing that my camera was being adjusted. As we passed through the park in front of the hospital there was a

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### *The American Tropics*

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row of half-a-dozen musicians from the male ward seated on a bench; on the green close by under the shade of a huge ceiba tree a bevy of girls were taking their places for a dance, but as our presence seemed to retard their innocent revelry, we departed just as the church bell was tolling the death-knell of one of their number. One remembers more easily in a leper hospital than elsewhere that it is appointed unto all men once to die.

## CHAPTER IV

**A**T daybreak on the twelfth of February we weighed anchor, and before any one knew it the ship had cleared the Dragon's Mouth; at breakfast we were steaming westward with the trade wind on the indigo blue of the Caribbean Sea. The white-caps rolled like the white horses of Neptune, leaping and tossing their manes in the distance, but the steamer pursued the even tenor of her way and everybody welcomed a day of rest. There were few early risers, the fatigue of sight-seeing and the intense heat restraining even the largest purchasers of silver bracelets and other finery from comparing specimens and prices of their collections. We had an exciting race with a school of, apparently, porpoises, but I was told they were a species of perch called barracoudas; whether shark, porpoise or barracouda, they were very numerous and certainly were rapid swimmers, and leaped

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## *The American Tropics*

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above the surface in the most frolicsome way. At ten o'clock we passed the island of Margarita, once famous for its pearl fisheries which were a source of considerable wealth during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

The only serious consideration of the day was the momentous subject of clothes—and that in a climate where clothes are little needed and by many of the natives little worn. How would it be in the mountains of Venezuela, was asked; would the ninety or more tunnels, the ride in windowless steam cars with dust and smoke, incapacitate a suit for all future use? Then again, what if we were invited to meet the President of the United States of Venezuela? These and other questions came up for adjudication. No one could think of carrying more than was absolutely necessary, but what was necessary was a *pons asinorum* to the wisest.

The following morning I was called before daylight, five o'clock; breakfast was to

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## *A Midwinter Cruise*

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be served at six and at seven we were to set foot on South American soil. The trip was certainly strenuous and we began to look forward to the time when we could go home and rest. But who would miss the glories of a tropical night just before dawn? The Southern Cross was at its best, dipping to the west, its lowermost star, which is of the first magnitude, was over our port bow about a hand's breadth above the horizon. To the north on our starboard quarter the Pole Star was about the same distance above the water-line, with the Dipper just above the horizon. All were remarkably brilliant. Then there appeared indistinctly a row of lights ahead, at first peeping then flickering on the water-line; it was La Guayra.

The Venezuelan coast at this point is precipitous and the country mountainous, green vegetation alternating with red clay, with a narrow beach on which the town is situated. Most of the houses are of rubble stone and mortar, white, pink and blue, one or two



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## *The American Tropics*

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stories high, with red-tiled or corrugated iron roofs and strong, iron-barred windows, while the unpaved streets are narrow and winding. The people are dark and small; they seem to have a restless, discontented look and are much given to jewelry and cigarettes.

Few negroes were seen, but you must remember it was only a quarter past seven in the morning. From our deck the diminutive locomotive and train of cars switching and backing, restless though apparently accomplishing nothing, looked more like toys in a play-room than the equipment that was to carry us over the mountains 3,099 feet above us and, after two hours of winding and crossing deep chasms, land us at the capital snugly ensconced in the beautiful valley of Caracas less than ten miles away. The railway is a narrow gauge and about twenty-three miles long, built and operated by an English company. Each coach seats twenty-three passengers.

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## *A Midwinter Cruise*

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After leaving La Guayra the train skirts a valley through dense foliage of banana and other tropical growth, soon rounding a headland far above, where a panorama of the town and sea is obtained. This is repeated at a still higher level and finally the line strikes the side of a deep valley which it follows most of the way. The scenery is grand and variegated, and, considering the difficulties to be overcome, the ride is not uncomfortable. The mountains are an eastern spur of the Great Andes range. The best views are to the right. This is not a country for automobiles, nor wagons for that matter; pack trains take the place of vehicles, and burros with heavy loads on their backs, threading their way over stony mountain trails, with horsemen at intervals, make a picture such as we used to see in the geographies of our boyhood days. Here and there a man with a machete stops to gaze as the train sweeps by. Finally the panting engine regains its breath, which tells us that

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we have passed the highest point; soon we near the terminus, adobe houses appear in increasing number and thus an insidious entrance to Caracas is made.

The capital rests in a large basin or valley, twelve miles long and about three miles at its widest part, surrounded on all sides by hills and mountains. It has more than 100,000 inhabitants, most of whom call themselves whites, but only about one per cent. can show an untarnished escutcheon of white blood. There is a plentiful supply of negroes who were originally imported into the country as slaves, while the mass of the population is a mixture of Indian, negro and Spaniard. Caracas was founded in 1567, its population in 1810 was estimated at 50,000, but it made little progress during the nineteenth century on account of the devastating influences of war, earthquakes and pestilence. The most severe seismic disturbance occurred in 1812, with great loss of life and property. Some years afterward the city

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was decimated by cholera, while war, supposed to have been terminated when Spain acknowledged the independence of Venezuela in 1845, has proven endemic. From a superficial view it appears that the people are scarcely equal to self-government in its true sense, and the mailed hand of authority is needed to insure stability.

Apparently the country's moneyed men are not those whose ancestors have bequeathed them a competence, nor are merchant princes, if such exist, much in evidence, nor their captains of industry. Political power seems to be the golden road which leads to affluence and distinction. Those with whom the tourist comes most in contact—cab drivers, porters, waiters, shop-keepers—conceal most effectively any tendency to cordiality they may entertain, while of the better element we saw but little. In the few opportunities we had of observing them, they seemed to possess marked distinction, the women particularly impressing me with a grace and

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quiet elegance of manner that speaks the refining influences of many generations, contrasting most favorably with "our own" so-called smart set. On the other hand, those who are supposed to represent the great majority and hold the reins of government bear evidence of having had riches suddenly thrust upon them—or at least placed within their reach. The only class seemingly content and in full accord with its environment is the priesthood, living today as it did yesterday, well fed, well clad and well housed, its position and emoluments apparently secure.

It is from the outlying hill-tops that the city is most attractive, and its main points of interest stand out in grateful contrast to the monotonous mass of two-story, light yellow, tile-topped buildings, with rough, cobble-paved streets running at right angles. One or two street car lines with small, dilapidated mule-cars cross the city. The contrast between the government buildings and plazas



CARACAS FROM MIRAFLORES.



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constructed and maintained at the public expense, and those occupied by private individuals is greater than is usually seen even in autocratic countries. Of the former the most noteworthy is the Capitol, built in the form of a square on the site of a convent of the Carmelite friars and covering an area of more than two acres. It contains the House of Assembly where the National Congress meets, together with the University, National Library and Municipal Palace. Close by is the Municipal Theatre, which receives a subsidy from the government, and the Masonic Temple, said to be one of the finest in South America. Caracas also has a Pantheon where lie the remains of her illustrious dead. These buildings are either constructed of or painted to resemble light-colored stone, varying in design according to their several uses as well as the time of their erection, and, while not wholly devoid of architectural beauty, owe their chief grandeur to their dust-colored, dust-



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covered commonplace environment. Most of the public buildings and many other improvements were consummated during the dictatorship of Guzman Blanco, 1870 to 1882, who hypothecated the national revenue by these large expenditures and subsidies. It is said that Blanco while thus beautifying the city was not wholly unmindful of his own interests—but the tongue of slander speaks all languages with fluency. The Cathedral, said to have been built about 1614, with its campanile and mellow-toned bells, faces the Plaza Mayor, and while not especially imposing, is yet in full accord with the place and bears some evidence of antiquity and the struggles it has withstood. These buildings either face or adjoin the main square, called Plaza Bolivar or Plaza Mayor, which contains an equestrian statue of Bolivar, the first liberator of Venezuela as well as of Columbia, Peru and Bolivia. Since his time (he died in 1830) numerous liberators have arisen, but as their claims to this distinction consist in

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## *A Midwinter Cruise*

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liberating their country from their predecessors in office, they are not liable to be long remembered by posterity.

It must be remembered that Venezuela was the only part of the American continent that Columbus ever saw. Most appropriate, therefore, is the statue of the great explorer on an eminence overlooking the city from the west.

There seems to be no desire on the part of the chief executive of the United States of Venezuela to live in La Casa Amarilla, or The Yellow House, which is the official residence of the president. The present president's predecessor, Jacinto de Crespo, erected a spacious palace, Miraflores, on an elevation overlooking the valley and the town. As it was unoccupied, some of our party paid an additional tariff and were given rooms in this beautiful structure. Large, stately and impracticable though it appeared, with its carved marble sinks and mosaic-floored kitchen, in Miraflores one would scarcely look for

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the home of a true and honest liberator. While Bolivar devoted his life and his considerable fortune to the service of his country his successors have surrounded themselves with a lavish display, and if rumor be true, considerable wealth, which does not consort well with the impoverished public exchequer or the obvious poverty of the people. Crespo may have been an exception, as many believe.

Sleeping in a real palace, in a picturesque country, even if conveniences were inadequate or defective, had a peculiar charm. Not that it was especially inviting, or even comfortable, to sleep on the thinnest of ticks and under the thinnest of coverings. The weather, which had been fine and warm in the morning, became cool and wet in the afternoon and during the night the temperature fell to 54 degrees Fahrenheit. I called for an additional coverlet and found on retiring an extra blue drilling sheet which was not sufficiently warm for comfort. The

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sudden fall in the temperature was not devoid of danger as I contracted a severe coryza. But I had the satisfaction of knowing that the cold was as unusual as was, to me, sleeping in a South American palace. One chamber is particularly worthy of mention, the earthquake room, constructed with iron beams to prevent the masonry from falling. Breakfasting in Miraflores, too, had its drawbacks—especially when one breakfasts at six o'clock in the morning—because in a land of mañana almost everything you want has not arrived. After my experience at the Gran Hotel Klint the previous day, I took the precaution to order before retiring and looked forward to a simple though palatable breakfast of fresh eggs and *café con leche* as I remembered it served in Mexico; but at the critical moment the Venezuelan hens and the Venezuelan cows or the Venezuelan *muchacho* failed, and we broke fast on bread and bananas with coffee that tasted like an infusion of tobacco.

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We visited President Cipriano Castro's actual residence, the "Villa Zoila" on the attractive Avenida del Pariso (Paradise Avenue) in the outskirts of the town. The President and his family were away so we had an opportunity of going through the place at leisure. Constructed of wood and much stained glass, it was less massive than other buildings we had seen. The furnishings and objects of art gave me the impression of having been collected hurriedly rather than accumulated—as if the General had commanded one of his henchmen to gather so many wagon-loads of household goods; the result may be imagined.

The Republic of Venezuela has copied largely from her elder sister, the United States of North America. In fact much of the enthusiasm of Bolivar may have been fired by his visit to North America before his military career began. The Plaza Washington, ornamented like the Plaza Bolivar with mosaic walks and numerous plants and trees,

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has in its center a statue of George Washington.

Our party, being mainly from the United States, was given a concert by the Military Band on the Plaza Bolivar the evening after our arrival. Whether it was because I was far from home, or because the band was unusually good I cannot say, but never did music sound sweeter or more soul-stirring. There was a *vivida vis animi* to it that made a strong impression on us. The concert furnished an opportunity of further studying the people of Caracas and it was quite apparent that we likewise were objects of curiosity. Aside from impressions already mentioned, I was particularly struck with the number of boys between the ages of twelve and fourteen seen promenading, cane in hand, ogling the women or stopping frequently to stare more deliberately at the rows of seats occupied by native ladies and gentlemen. It reminded me of the old *roués* at

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the Grand Opera House in Paris, very out of keeping with the callow period of youth.

As to the hotels (and I mention them with regret) there are the Gran Hotel, the Gran Hotel Klint, and the Gran Hotel de Venezuela, each in some respects worse than the other. But the statement that

"Who'er has travell'd life's dull round,  
Where'er his stages may have been,  
May sigh to think he still has found  
The warmest welcome at an inn!"

is abundant evidence that Shenstone never was entertained at an "inn" in Venezuela. Even Johnson, the great patron of inns, must have palled had he visited Caracas.

The shopping tendency was not generally gratified in the South American Republic. Naturally a few Panama hats and some old pieces of jewelry were picked up, but so few tourists invade this mountain stronghold of discomfort that the merchant was scarcely alive to the lucrative possibilities of tourist traffic. Fakirs were there in abundance, as



GRAN HOTEL, KLINT, VENEZUELA.





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well as itinerant venders of cancelled postage stamps.

Games of chance furnish amusement or a livelihood to many Venezuelans. On arriving we were given a card of admission to a "Club," which set forth in an elaborate way that all the privileges of the club would be extended to us during our stay. Here, thought I, is genuine hospitality. With a few friends I visited the so-called club and found a few rooms with various gaming devices, but not a semblance of any of the comforts of a club as generally understood. This might occur though in New York or Leadville, not to mention Monte Carlo.

Although Caracas is an interesting place, yet when the hour of departure drew near I was as eager to move on as were the iron horses hitched tandem to the train. Standing on the paved esplanade in front of the Miraflores to take a parting view, the town lay buried in the white mist of early morning, the air was cooled by the breath of the

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mountains, and neighboring peaks, penetrating, and visible above, a stratum of cloud, looked like islands on an undulating sea of mist. The clear tones from the Campanile below announced the hour of seven and in thirty-four minutes the "special" was threading its way to the sea.

From the impressions obtained in a short visit one is not surprised that the main utilities of the Republic are controlled by foreigners. The great Venezuelan Railway, connecting Caracas with Valencia, a distance of about ninety miles, is owned by Germans. The difficulties of railway construction in Venezuela may be realized when one considers that it took six years of assiduous labor to complete the road. There are eighty-six tunnels and two hundred and twelve bridges. From what had been said about the "long trip" I undertook it with some misgivings, but was agreeably surprised to find modern day coaches with glass windows and comfortable, cane-upholstered seats.

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## *A Midwinter Cruise*

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After leaving Caracas the train soon plunged into a long tunnel, the first of the eighty-six; it seemed interminable and was almost stifling with smoke. I began to comprehend why the courage of so many had failed and felt that the prediction that we would finally emerge in the guise of chimney sweeps would in all probability be realized. We passed along the banks of the Guaire through cultivated fields of maize, which was about two feet high, sugar-cane, bananas and what looked like cabbage, onions and other garden products, all in a high state of cultivation. Artistic cottages were passed, barn-yards with fowls, black razor-backs and donkeys. In the picturesque white villages churches soft in color are always the most prominent buildings and apparently the foci around which the towns have grown. At Las Adjuntas the line leaves the river and soon enters the tortuous valley of San Petro with its extensive coffee plantations. Looking ahead as we

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rounded a sharp curve Los Teques was seen far above, and after numerous windings the train began to climb upward until finally the straggling outposts of the town were passed and at half-past eight o'clock the station was reached. From this point the road makes a gradual descent and some of the wildest mountain scenery of the trip was encountered.

On leaving Caracas the best views were to the right; now the grand panorama of mountains and deep ravines was seen to the left. The striking contrast between bright sunshine and deep shadow, with numerous variations in light and tint, created an effect never to be forgotten. A panorama of nature in all her sublimity, vast and silent, inhabited only by the condor and the omnipresent buzzard, denizen of towns and mountain wastes, the black-winged scavenger of the tropics. Although we had passed eighty-four tunnels so short were they (the first excepted) that they were scarcely noticed. No dust had

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## *A Midwinter Cruise*

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thus far been encountered, but as we gradually reached a lower altitude the heat which during the morning had not been uncomfortable began to assert itself. First I discarded a thin "sweater," then a waistcoat, but not until Victoria was reached at noon did an opportunity present itself to remove an extra stratum of under flannels. Even here the opportunity did not present itself, nor was it presented; I created it in the solitude of an adjoining jungle. The extra clothing would have been worn, however, and no extemporized boudoir utilized, had I been aware, as I afterwards was, that the proprietor of the station restaurant, while wandering in this woodland the week before, had been fatally bitten by a poisonous serpent.

As we descended to the lower levels the earth again became red and we were in the midst of the dense tropical vegetation of the torrid zone. Coffee plantations, sugar-cane and bananas seemed to be the chief products. Most attractive of all was a luxuriant vine,

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the norantea or combretum, which climbs with its large blossoms of red and gold covering huge trees of the forest with a mantle of bloom, gorgeous beyond description.

At Victoria we remained an hour and a half for luncheon. It proved to be a veritable tourist picnic, seated at long tables under the shade of mahogany, banyan and "fire-flower" trees, with other varieties less familiar. The natives were not permitted to enter the station enclosure, so they crowded against the fence and seemed to enjoy the spectacle as much as we did. They were mostly negroes and doubtless were of the idle element, such as may be seen at any American railway station.

Aside from the luxuriant foliage the place gloried in a street car line, very like others we had seen in Venezuela. From this point we again traversed extensive mahogany forests, passed cattle ranches and cozy stations covered with gorgeous mantles of bougainvillea, a purplish-pink flowering shrub



RAILWAY STATION, VENEZUELA.





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that runs riot over buildings and fences, presenting a solid mass of bloom. The next town of importance is Cagua, of 5,000 inhabitants, whose principal industry is the raising of poultry and pigs. During the last three hours of the trip it was hot and dusty, and about three o'clock the beautiful waters of Lake Valencia appeared to our left. The lake is 1,362 feet above the sea level and covers an area of 273 square miles. After skirting its shores for a few miles, the city of Valencia (next to Caracas in size, having about 36,000 inhabitants) is reached. It has more of a metropolitan air than the towns we had passed and seemed to be enjoying more prosperity than is normal in Venezuela. There was a large delegation at the station to see us; evidently a train load of American tourists was not an everyday occurrence. Here again there was a marked contrast between those of high and low degree, those of fair skins and those of the dark or mixed types. One of the former especially at-

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tracted attention, not only on account of her neat and well-fitting gown of pure white, but also of her hair of a bright Titian tint, lending a pleasing contrast to her black-haired and dusky neighbors. As this bevy of attractive women came in range a dozen cameras clicked; at first they recoiled and a young gallant with a dash of negro blood in his veins attempted to shield them from the stares of so many lenses, but their good nature prevailed, and the friendly intervention of one in their own station in life soon made them not unwilling subjects.

We were now in the torrid zone and felt its glowing heat; strange fruits and flowers were on sale, with an abundance of oranges, bananas and pineapples. We had also reached the terminus of the German railway, but our train was transferred to the English line extending from Valencia to Puerta Cabella, a distance of thirty-four miles. During the first few miles the grade is quite precipitous—eight per cent. where the Abt Cogwheel





FARM HOUSE AND STABLES, VENEZUELA.

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## *A Midwinter Cruise*

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System is used. The scenery was quite unlike the lofty windings over the Andes; our route now followed deep gorges, along foaming cataracts dashing onward to the sea, and hills which seemed high only because they were near. Dense forests were traversed, winding road-ways with long trains of pack mules were seen, and picturesque straw-thatched cottages and primitive inns where the dashing caballeros are wont to quench their thirst and where the weary traveller might find a night's repose. While nature is lavish in her gifts, yet withal it seems a hard, cruel world to live in. More fortunate, thought I, is the man who views it from an open window as he glides along on the iron rails.

At El Palito the sea level is reached and for nine miles we followed the shore in an easterly direction through jungle set off with pale green or fawn colored cacti twenty or more feet in height. Finally the unpaved, unkempt streets and small court-yards of the

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seaport town of Puerto Cabella (port of the hair, because a ship may be moored with a cable of a single hair) was reached at six o'clock in the evening. Few of my days have been so full of interest, nor have I ever been offered a comparable continued spectacle of the pleasing, the wonderful and the awe-inspiring—a page in nature's physical geography of the world. So intense, so unconsciously strenuous had been the day that until I was seated in the boat waiting to be towed to our floating house did I realize a sense of listless fatigue. After dinner a ball was given on board to the townspeople, but comfortable in my cabin, lulled by the soft hum of the electric fan and the distant strains of the ship's band, South America became what it still seems—a dream.

## CHAPTER V

THE Dutch possessions in the Caribbean Sea must be a source of annoyance to the frugal burghers of Holland. Cura-coa, their largest island and the seat of the Dutch West Indian Government, has an area of two hundred and twelve square miles and comprises more than half of their West Indian possessions, which aggregate a population of only about fifty thousand and present a yearly deficit of about sixty thousand guilders.

It was seven o'clock on the morning of the fifteenth of February that land was sighted off our starboard bow. Before our arrival—in 1527, in fact—it had been noticed by the Spaniards, and in 1634 by the Dutch, who, finding no one at home on landing, took possession. Several nations played shuffle-board with the island until early in the nineteenth century when it was restored to the peaceful possession of Holland. We



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## *The American Tropics*

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had no serious intention of pre-empting the island, besides, on coming nearer, evidence of habitation became apparent, and in the distance whitish dots and spires proved to be the town of Willemstad with its snug harbor expanding into a land-locked bay around which the town is built. We did not land but passed near enough to obtain a good view of the quaint town with its light-colored buildings in which pale yellows and blues predominate, with a sprinkling of red tiled roofs.

Curacoa is mainly noted for a liqueur of the same name, in which a wild orange, native here, is one of the flavoring ingredients. While enjoying your after-dinner glass of Curacoa, however, you may as well know that little if any of the liqueur is made here. The principal export is salt.

At noon another island, Oruba, smaller than Curacoa was passed, and later in the day the smoke-like headlands of the Coajira Peninsula of South America could be seen

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## *A Midwinter Cruise*

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on our left. Little else of note appeared.

Going with the trade wind in a south-westerly direction, the day was hot, the hottest we had had. The thermometer in the ship's doctor's room stood 86 degrees Fahrenheit, with great humidity. One almost envied the flying fish glistening above the dark azure of the surface.

The second day was also hot and muggy, but the sky was overcast, a most grateful change from the glare of perpetual sunshine. It takes several generations for the light-skinned to become thoroughly acclimated to daily sunlight unmodified by clouds, and even then there is a compromise, in which the dark pigment appears in the skin to shut out some of the light. This, being nature's method, is doubtless the best, for until the dark tint appears the individual suffers more or less from too much light.

Towards morning of the third day, a lighthouse to port showed our near approach to land—the Isthmus of Panama. Finally the

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## *The American Tropics*

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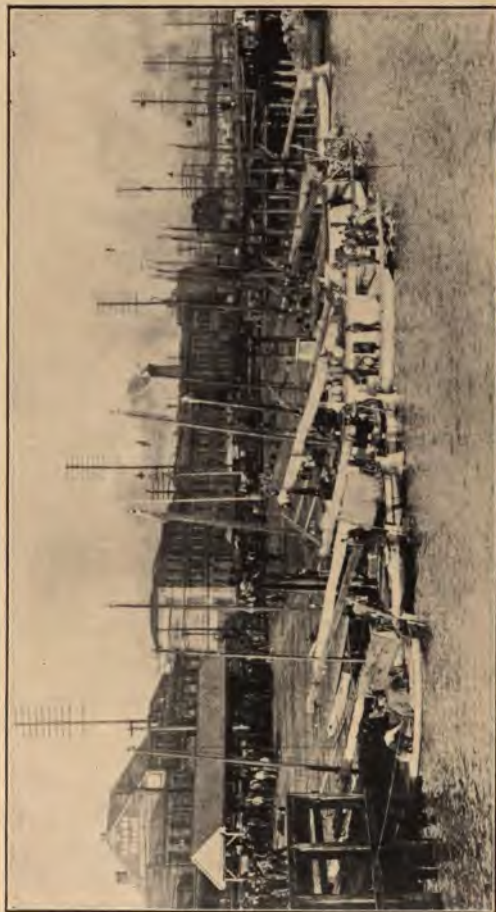
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lights of Colon could be made out ahead and at daybreak the translucent ultramarine sea became a yellowish-green and finally turbid. At seven o'clock we dropped anchor, completing our seven hundred and seventy-eight-mile run from Puerto Cabella.

After a rest of two days and nights, the prospect of visiting one of the great battlefields in which the mental and physical strength of man is contending with the infinite forces of nature aroused even the most apathetic. For twenty-six years the warfare has been waged, with the loss of countless human lives and millions of treasure, but still the conflict goes on. I had an indefinite notion of the operations, scarcely amounting to an opinion, formed from conflicting reports of newspapers and magazines.

The day began with showers, some of which amounted to heavy rainfalls lasting half an hour or less, alternating with fitful sunshine, as if this warfare had extended to the very elements, or allegorically, was a





WHARF AT COLON.

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strife in which Despair and Hope contended. On account of its location, Colon is one of the wettest places on earth, having a yearly rainfall of one hundred and forty inches. This was one of the dry months, the rainy season extending from May to December.

It does not take long to gain a fair conception of at least one of the great problems that confronts the constructors of the Isthmian Canal: that of maintaining human life and health—a problem of sanitary science. Elevated but a few feet above the sea level on a small island of black muck; covered with an impenetrable jungle of rank vegetation; close to the mainland, which is of the same general character for several miles, with stagnant pools and sluggish streams—such is the site and environment of Colon. But Colon, or Aspinwall as it was formerly called, in spite of its unfavorable location, has felt the quickening hand of genius and is being raised above the sink-hole in which it has lain since its foundation in 1849, and

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## *The American Tropics*

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bids fair to be no longer a hotbed of pestilence. I was particularly impressed with the extensive sewage system and arrangement for the conveyance of pure water—almost equalling in magnitude the construction of a pipe line by the Standard Oil Company for conveying its products from the Pacific to the Atlantic Ocean. The construction of buildings has likewise been changed. In place of the low-lying, half-rotten wooden dwellings, houses are elevated on piles to afford free ventilation, which with the system of drainage and clearing now going on, must soon render the Atlantic terminus of the Canal more habitable for the Caucasian race. I even saw a large hotel-like structure, three stories high, built of brick, nearing completion.

Colon has many of the elements of a frontier town, and a very heterogeneous population, in which the Spaniard, more or less removed, predominates. The buildings are constructed mainly of wood and sheet iron,

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## *A Midwinter Cruise*

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streets are unpaved, and the mud, like many of the natives, is black. It is in no sense attractive and one does not have a desire to tarry long, however promising the future may be. With the completion of the great inter-oceanic waterway it may be found expedient to change the location of its Caribbean terminus.

To one who has given the topography of the Isthmus little attention the exact location of the Canal Zone and its Atlantic or Caribbean and Pacific termini is confusing. We naturally think of the Isthmus between North and South America as running north and south, but if a map be consulted it will be seen to form an arch extending from west to east with the proposed waterway between Colon and Panama running in a south-easterly direction. Panama consequently, although on the Pacific Ocean, is about forty miles east of Colon. The western terminus is in reality the eastern (Panama) and the eastern is the western (Colon).



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## *The American Tropics*

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American influences other than sanitation were also discernable, and one felt a home feeling on the special train that was to bear us over the Canal route to the Pacific Ocean. The island of Manzanillo upon which Colon is situated seemed so little like an island that it was difficult to realize that the narrow lagoon separated us from the mainland, as other lagoons and morasses seemed equally important. The railway soon enters more attractive scenery, however, with hills to the left on which are located many of the magazines for storing material and a considerable number of dwellings. The land forming the roadbed is low and comparatively level for twenty miles or more, after which a more rolling or hilly surface interspersed with a few morasses is encountered.

With the change of landscape, one is forcibly reminded of the deadly pestilence that held undisputed sway until the investigations of those medical heroes, Ross, Reed, Carroll and Lazear, revealed the cause and pointed

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## *A Midwinter Cruise*

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out the way of preventing epidemics of yellow fever and the omnipresent if less deadly malarial poison. Scarcely had the train cleared the unsavory settlement of Cristobal, a suburb of Colon, before a cemetery was passed near Monkey Hill to the left. Several other graveyards were seen as we proceeded, thickly dotted with wooden "gravestones" which spoke more forcibly than could words of the veritable death trap Panama has been to the Caucasian race and particularly to the unacclimated. Abandoned machinery, dredges, locomotives by the score, stood rusting, covered by an ivy-like growth, a sad comment on the mismanagement and cupidity of man. The farther we went the more the place seemed like a junkman's paradise.

After leaving Colon the sky cleared and on gaining higher ground the climatical conditions improved. Evidently the American government has profited much by the failure of its predecessors, the French, but we must remember that sanitary science has pro-

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## *The American Tropics*

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gressed to the extent of rendering possible today what was undreamed of in 1881. The French were thus greatly handicapped at the outset. Already it became evident that the present constructors had very wisely made the Canal Zone not only habitable but attractive. Nowhere will you find laborers housed so well, or more care given to their well-being.

A run of about seven miles brings you to Gatun, a town of about nine hundred inhabitants on the Chagres River which is navigable for small steamers to this point. Farther on the river becomes a stream of variable size according as it is the wet or dry season. From a sweeping flood it falls to a clear, gently flowing stream, which by courtesy is called a river. It is not unattractive and as we proceeded we saw that its banks were covered with a riotous profusion of verdure—stately palms, mahogany and ceiba trees in a setting of impenetrable jungle of vines and ferns. Neither was the ride un-

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## *A Midwinter Cruise*

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comfortable; the temperature varies but a few degrees throughout the year, ranging from seventy-four degrees Fahrenheit in January to eighty-six in March, and seldom higher than eighty-nine. The humidity rendered the air sultry, and on exertion one perspired freely.

Although small settlements had been passed, the largest and most picturesquely situated was Emperador, or Empire, within a mile and a half of Culebra on the "Continental Divide." Empire has a population of four thousand and is mainly distinguished by a hill two hundred and fifty feet high on which formerly stood an old fort, now occupied by the barracks of the United States troops which guard the Canal Zone. The hill must have seen some stirring times in the factional warfares which preceded the United States occupation.

The first evidence of actual work in digging the Canal was in meeting, side tracked, a train-load of reddish rocks which were be-

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ing removed to a place of deposit. The approach to the great divide, the back-bone of the Isthmus, was effected without incident; in fact, thus far it had impressed me as a remarkably level country and admirably adapted to canal purposes.

The Canal Zone is a strip of land granted in perpetuity to the United States, ten miles wide, extending over the proposed canal route through the Republic of Panama, together with all lands outside the Zone which may be found necessary in constructing or maintaining the Canal. The cities of Colon and Panama are not included in the Zone, but the United States is granted full power in all sanitary regulations and if necessary in maintaining order. The Zone is under military control. The compensation given the Republic of Panama was ten million dollars with an annual payment of two hundred and fifty thousand dollars, beginning nine years from the time of ratification of the treaty.

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As we passed along the impression of seeing so many graveyards and such piles of abandoned machinery would have been depressing had it not been enlivened here and there by the presence of trim soldiers in khaki suits, groups of attractive cottages on the hillsides, and the effective appearance of the railroad and its equipment.

It was about eleven o'clock when we arrived at Culebra, a small station on the "Continental Divide" about thirty-five miles from Colon and twelve miles from Panama. The celebrated Culebra Cut is less than a mile from the main line of the railroad and is connected by a branch line. We anticipated a tiresome walk or climb as the case might be, but were agreeably surprised to find our train backing alongside the cut to a point where most of the excavating had been done. Standing on the edge of the cut it is difficult to realize the amount of labor required in making the necessary excavations at this point, which has furnished the crux

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## *The American Tropics*

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of the labor problem if not of the whole Panama Canal construction. Other problems of caring for swollen streams, particularly the Chagres River during heavy rain-falls, the construction of dams, locks, etc., being less spectacular, particularly in the dry season, appeal less forcibly to the casual observer. The entire Isthmus is of volcanic formation and at the Culebra Cut one can form a fair idea of its geological character. In color it is dark red or maroon, of soft stone which soon disintegrates when wet or exposed to the air. Although it was Sunday we had an opportunity of seeing the men at work blasting rocks, scooping them up with large steam shovels or dredges and loading the mass into cars propelled by pony locomotives. I was told that many of the abandoned French engines were daily brought into requisition, but not so with the thousand and one useless articles ranging from carpet tacks to pianos which were dumped into the capacious warehouses faster

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than the dirt was excavated from the mammoth trench. The inevitable result came when the labor and material which originally cost \$400,000,000 was disposed of to the United States for \$40,000,000. Of this enormous amount, it was said, probably on good authority, that one-third had been spent on the Canal, one-third wasted, and one-third stolen. When the French company abandoned the project, it was estimated to be about two-fifths finished.

We had been but a few minutes at the Cut when the colossal ditch was dotted with white gowns, white suits and white umbrellas, the dots looking like men and women in miniature climbing its rocky slopes. I was glad of an opportunity to talk with some of the men employed on dredges and locomotives; with the less skilled laborers I was unable to converse. On the whole the men seemed satisfied with their work and professed as good health as they had had in the States. Most of them had been laid off for



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## *The American Tropics*

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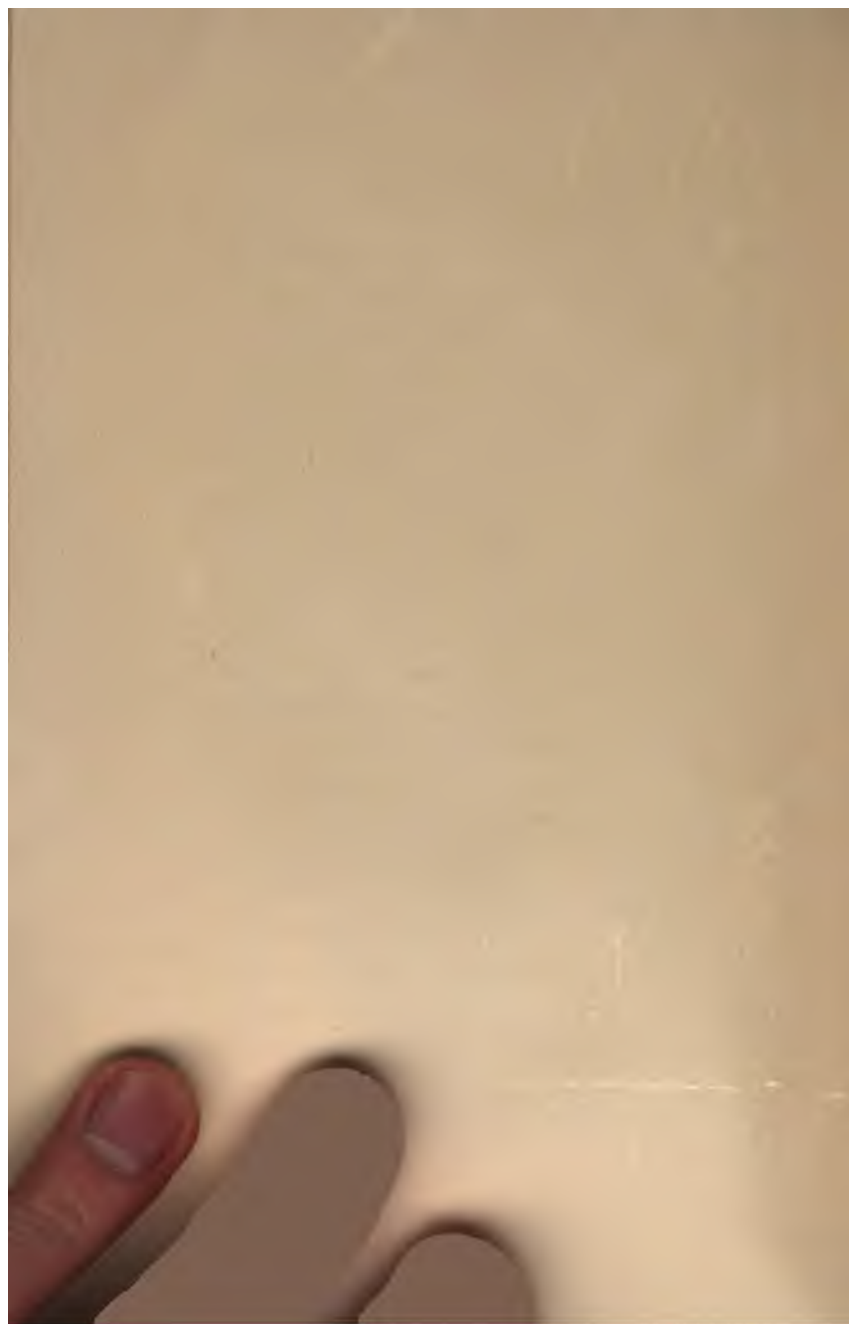
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two or three weeks during the past two years from malarial poisoning.

At Culebra a fair idea can be obtained of the actual work now in progress as well as that done by the former constructors. The old and the new stand side by side, unkempt shacks which hardly deserve the name of houses are huddled closely together and contrast strongly with neat cottages painted brown or green with white trimmings which are scattered over the neighboring slopes, presenting a pleasing picture. The modern houses for the unmarried men have one large sleeping room, with a dining and cooking building close by. For families either separate cottages or buildings divided into apartments are provided. Open porches and verandas screened to shut out the pestiferous mosquito are seen on all buildings constructed by the United States. Even on hills where these dwellings are located they are built on piles three or four feet high to allow free ventilation and to prevent the accumu-



TYPES OF NEW DWELLINGS, CANAL ZONE.



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## *A Midwinter Cruise*

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lation of moisture. Such a procedure is necessary in a climate where the air is so heavily charged with humidity. The heat while not excessive is continuous, and those unacclimated who are accustomed to short seasons, varied by heat and cold, must regulate their mode of living to suit the changed conditions. Breaking up the soil in a virgin country is always fraught with danger, and those who still recall the pestilential fevers attendant on the construction of canals even in the, at present, salubrious States of North America, can form some idea of the dangers encountered in the Isthmus of Panama. At the same time one must bear in mind that conditions in relation to the prevention of disease have changed, and most of the diseases most dreaded are now preventable. Only under military or despotic supervision, however, can the measures of prevention be carried out in the heterogeneous gathering of almost all races and conditions of men now congregated in the Canal Zone. Even in

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## *The American Tropics*

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well regulated communities, as observed in England and the United States, the most generally understood and easily preventable of all infectious diseases, smallpox, cannot always be prevented. Only by an intelligent supervision with absolute authority, therefore, can the work now so well under way go on unhampered by disease.

The appalling death rate consequent on the construction of the Panama Railway during the late forties of the last century still lingers in memory, and many exaggerated reports, some of which emanate from discharged employees, of the unwholesomeness of the Isthmus have from time to time been given out, but under present conditions one need not hesitate to make his abode here and life may be accompanied by many enjoyments not easily procured in the temperate zone.

The management has wisely given much attention to the social side of life, realizing the truth of the well worn saying, "All work

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## *A Midwinter Cruise*

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and no play makes Jack a dull boy;" accordingly it has instituted various forms of amusement, including outdoor and indoor games, in which the men are encouraged to compete for trophies and prizes. Reading rooms are also provided. Not is the wandering minstrel neglected and occasionally a theatrical troupe is secured. The Y. M. C. A. has co-operated with the administration in various ways in endeavoring to surround the men with wholesome influences.

So much has been said about securing laborers for the work that I was interested while mingling with the men to note their nationalities. Fewer Chinamen were seen than I expected, nor was the negro overmuch in evidence. Bands of Italians and Spaniards, especially the latter, seemed to furnish a large quota of the laborers. I was told that the negro cannot be depended upon for more than three days out of six, while of all laborers the Northern Spaniard is most to be desired. The United States furnishes most

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## *The American Tropics*

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of the skilled workmen, and those employed in handling machinery, engineers and those of similar trades.

To the average sight-seer the "Continental Divide" and the great Culebra Cut are something of a disappointment. The highest point being less than two hundred and ninety feet above sea level, and the distance across the Isthmus about fifty miles, it impresses one as a level country. The mind does not readily grasp the more technical features of the work, so widely and often so wildly spoken of in the political press.

The locomotive whistle finally collected the scattered units of our party, hot and perspiring. In the comfortable coaches the "Continental Divide" was apparently soon forgotten when the stewards from the well-stocked Kaiserliche Schiff filed through the train with trays of sandwiches and Apollinaris water. As we approached the main line the regular train stood at Culebra station waiting for us to proceed. It was well



AS IT WAS, CANAL ZONE.





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filled and, being Sunday, most of the men and women were in holiday garb. White suits with dark skins predominated. People seemed to enjoy themselves and it might have been Poughkeepsie, Elgin, or Newport News, instead of the most written about place of the American Continent. A few unimportant settlements were passed. When within three miles of Panama the train passed through a wide mangrove swamp, and on emerging an imposing wooden structure, the main Government Hospital, was seen on a hill to our right which proved to be Mont Ancon, six hundred and thirty feet in height. The hospital, which is situated in the suburbs of Panama, was constructed by the French company and is admirably adapted in location and equipment for the purpose for which it was designed. It is still used as a hospital. Before entering the city our train switched off to allow us to see the great steamship wharf, La Boca, with the greenish waters of the Pacific Ocean spreading out in the distance.

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## *The American Tropics*

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We also had an opportunity of seeing the proposed Pacific entrance to the Canal. Two or three partially submerged battleships near an island in the distance we were told were the derelicts of a maritime encounter between Columbia and some of her warring neighbors.

One should approach the City of Panama, the oldest on the American Continent, with reverent steps, for here lie the remains of an illustrious past awaiting the quickening to a more glorious future. Panama, an Indian word signifying abounding in fish, was founded by Pedro Arias de Avila in 1518 on a coral and basaltic rock formation on a bay of the same name, although by sailors once known as the Bay of Calms. It enjoyed the blessings of plenty if not of peace for more than a century, being the emporium for the gold and silver mines of Peru and connected with the Atlantic seaboard by an overland trail. Among other things it gloried in having eight monasteries, one cathedral, two

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### *A Midwinter Cruise*

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churches and a hospital. It was the focus from which radiated the religion of Rome in the Western World, its votaries planting the cross and establishing missions along the Pacific slope northward to San Francisco, and southward among the more precipitous fastnesses of the Andes. Prosperity, however, led to its destruction for it attracted the covetous eyes of Sir Henry Morgan, a Welsh pirate, who with his band penetrated its formidable walls and for three weeks sacked and pillaged the town, leaving in place of architectural beauty, wealth and an organized community, a mass of ruins, its gold dissipated and its surviving inhabitants led away in bondage. But a location so advantageous could not be abandoned, and three years later, in 1673, Villacorta re-located the city on a more secure site, five miles to the westward on a peninsula near the mouth of the Rio Grande, where Panama now stands. Only one of the ruins of old Panama remains, but of Panama as we know it there

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are many evidences of age. Many of the narrow, dust buried streets, which during the rainy season become almost impassable quagmires have been paved with vitrified brick or macadam and some have been widened. Others with cobblestone pavements which furnished admirable breeding pools for yellow fever-bearing stegomyia and the malaria-bearing anopheles, and from their irregular surfaces were the acme of discomfort, have been replaced by a more sanitary and serviceable roadway. Water and sewer conduits have been constructed and the whole city has received a general and most thorough renovation. It is just beginning to dawn on the United States Government, in spite of the strong opposition always encountered from the uninformed and the professional politician, that armies without sanitation are in effectiveness only armies of straw. Without sanitation the Panama Canal would be an impossibility, and much credit is due the present sanitary army corps, hampered as it

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still is by inadequate encouragement, for the work it has done since the American occupation in 1904. While sanitation has vouchsafed to all men the inalienable privilege of life in Panama, there has also been a reasonable regard to the pursuit of happiness. Attractive drives have been laid out and a commodious hostelry, the Hotel Tivoli, has been built on an eminence above, though adjacent to, the city, for the accomodation of the officers and others stationed here, as well as for the accomodation of visitors who might not find the average fonda to their liking.

Reference has previously been made to the topography of Panama, which may be further illustrated by the impression gained by two friends, who, arriving after nightfall, retired to a room in the Hotel Tivoli. Awakening at sunrise they were surprised on looking out of their windows to see the sun rising from the Pacific Ocean which they of course expected to find in the west. Each protested that he was awake, sober and sane—

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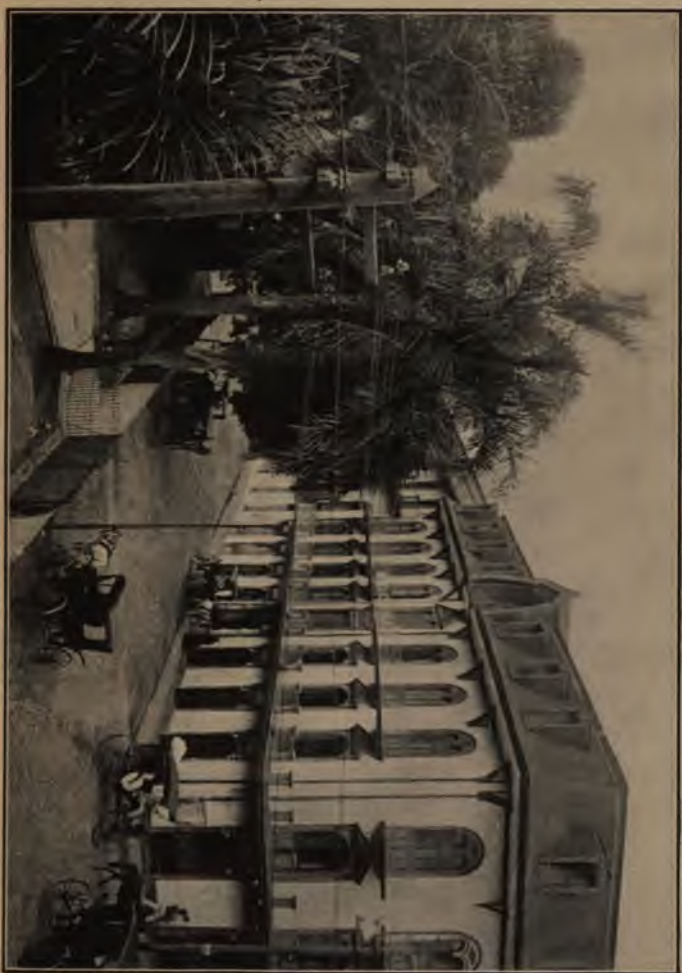
### *The American Tropics*

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but there in the west was the sun, whose conduct had always been considered well regulated and above reproach. If the orb were actually consistent, it must at the close of day set behind the hills toward the Atlantic in the east. On inquiry, however, it was found that the Bay of Panama at this point sweeps around the city, and what appeared to be a boundless main was in reality but an arm of the Pacific Ocean extending due east. Thus was the sun exonerated.

While at present the city of Panama is a salubrious and comfortable place to live, one must not think that all of its ancient glory has departed. Few other influences than that of time have changed its appearance, while the moist and equable climate has lent a softening effect which enhances it in the eyes of the appreciative. It is true that of the old city but a single tower remains, that of the Cathedral, but the new Panama is old and sufficiently picturesque to warrant a



A STREET OF THE NEWER PANAMA.





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## *A Midwinter Cruise*

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visit. Its approach from the ocean is said to be strikingly beautiful.

The buildings have a character peculiarly their own. Many of the older houses are of three stories with the two upper ones projecting over the street. In some of the narrower thoroughfares the distance from one house to another in the upper stories occupied as dwellings, permits of easy communication, friendly or otherwise, with one's neighbors across the way. The lower floor is given up to stores, shops or even stables.

The crowning feature of Panama, as of all Latin-American cities great and small, is the duomo or cathedral which was built in 1760. It has two lofty towers said to be the highest in Central America and a roof of mother-of-pearl. During the century after its construction it suffered but little from seismic disturbances, but six years after its restoration in 1876 it was badly shaken by an earthquake which threw down its facade. Its restoration is now nearing completion, al-

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## *The American Tropics*

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though the contrast between the old and the new is quite apparent.

There are two main squares or miniature parks, ornamented profusely with tropical plants and trees, the Plaza de la Cathedral and the Plaza Santa Anna. The former is in the center of the city and is surrounded by the Cathedral, the Bishop's Palace, the ground floor of which is occupied by the office of the Panama Lottery Company, the Grand Central Hotel, City Hall and Administration Building of the Panama Canal, together with several banks. Of course the Plaza has a band stand where a fine band plays Sunday evenings—it would not be true to the traditions of tropical America if it did not.

Another land-mark, the pride of the municipality and the Republic, is the Government Building which commands a beautiful view of the bay and surrounding hills. In the south-western part of the city there is an old sea wall or rampart now utilized as a



AN OLD CHURCH, PANAMA.



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## *A Midwinter Cruise*

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promenade, which commands an outlook of distinctive beauty. It overlooks the town with Ancon Hill in the background and the azure green of the Pacific, dotted with isles and lazy going sail, spreading its peaceful waters to the limit of vision.

To gain an idea of the life of this most cosmopolitan city, which on the completion of the great inter-oceanic waterway will become the Mecca of tourists, one should attend a promenade concert at the Plaza of a Sunday evening, and later, if occasion offer, a ball at the Commercial Club. Being more accessible, society is more cosmopolitan than in Caracas. The native ladies are more in evidence than is usual in the City of Mexico, but otherwise it possesses the general characteristics of the Latin race. Little drunkenness is seen among the natives, but rum rivals malaria among the foreign element. Light wines and beer are not easily obtained.

Commercially, Panama is the most interesting place we had visited. From its cen-

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tral position and its advantage of a free port, its bazaars contain the wares of almost every clime, and at moderate prices—provided one has the time and ability to barter. Here are Panama hats galore direct from the source of manufacture in Ecuador, silk from China, linen and woollens from England and hardware from the United States, tropical fruits from the Islands of the Blest, and cigars from almost everywhere. Everybody was on the qui vive for Panama hats. I was told at the office of the Hotel Tivoli that the Chinese merchants offered the best bargains in this commodity. Accordingly I procured a cab and went the rounds of the Chinese hat stores. Unfortunately the buyers were numerous and all but one of the stores or bazaars as they are called were closed on account of a Chinese holiday. Neither love nor money would induce them to open their shops on this sacred day, so the few hats that were offered were snapped up at high prices. I found Panama the best market for

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cigars and procured at an ordinary saloon a box of cigars that in price and flavor could not be equalled elsewhere. The weather during our stay continued muggy and exertion could not be made without effort and copious perspiration. The impression gained from a short visit was favorable and when the time came for leaving I wished to remain.

We were now about nine degrees, or less than seven hundred miles, from the equator and had reached our southern latitudinal limit. At this point the sun at noon is north of the zenith from the 13th of April to the 29th of August. From this point we were "going homeward." Returning, as we had come, across the Isthmus, an opportunity was offered to allow impressions gained on the outward trip to crystallize into more definite shape.

The Isthmian Canal will be built. Climat-ical conditions are not especially unfavorable, for the Canal Zone has an equable cli-



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mate and is never exposed to excessive heat. Its position is such that labor and supplies can be advantageously obtained, for both are offered in abundance. The United States Government has already improved the sanitary conditions of the Zone and rendered it as habitable as almost any part of the globe, and wages are high. The experimental stage has passed and a good start at the actual excavating has been made. In regard to the lock or the sea level construction there is an unanimity of opinion, so far as I could ascertain, in favor of the former. A simple engineering problem confronts the constructors.

So much for the local conditions of the spot. Conditions influencing the Canal construction outside the Zone are more complicated. These complicated and difficult problems arise mainly from the machinations of politicians and their friends, who desire to derive profit and clamor when it is not forthcoming. With the vigorous policy inaugu-

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rated and maintained by the United States Government, the construction of the Canal is assured and I believe in a reasonable length of time—the American people will not permit so great an undertaking to fail. Conceived by Angel Saavedra in 1520, the present route recommended by Antonio Galvao in 1550, begun by the De Lesseps in 1881, it will when completed redound to the lasting credit of the United States for its actual construction and contribute materially to its advancement, while rendering a perpetual service to the civilized world.

## CHAPTER VI

ON a tropical sea sailing in the teeth of the trade wind is far more pleasant than when the wind is astern. Going in a north-easterly direction we felt the refreshing change and the dolce far niente life on shipboard began to bring out anew individual peculiarities. It was pleasing to assume that for two nights and a day after leaving Colon there would be nothing to disturb the quiet repose and inactivity which invites calm reflection. In this, however, I was mistaken. At first, rumors of dissatisfaction were heard which, as the day wore on, culminated in a meeting in the after cabin to take cognizance of various alleged wrongs. First, the rumored differences between the captain and the manager of the shore trips called for adjudication. As

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neither of the supposed belligerents appeared to present his case, it resulted in the signing of petitions and counter petitions which were to be forwarded to the Company, to the Associated Press and scattered to the winds by the Marconi machine on the hurricane deck to insure its being caught by passing craft in search of news and thus given to the world. Alas, that so much oratory and judicial acumen should be destined to waste its vigor on the ocean air! But as nothing ever appeared in print and as the outside world moved on without even a tremor, such was doubtless the case. The agitation came, however, most opportunely and served in lieu of the usual entertainment night on the trans-Atlantic liner. It also brought out latent talents and acted as a safety valve to the enforced indolence of highly charged brain cells. Furthermore, it enabled people to become better acquainted—whether they were or were not on better terms afterward need not be discussed at this time.

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The distance from Colon to Kingston is five hundred and fifty miles. The second night being cool I slept under a blanket with the electric fan at rest for the first time since crossing the Tropic of Cancer. The following morning we expected to sight the Island of Jamaica, land of rum and ginger, at an early hour, but it was nearly seven o'clock before the first dim, cloud-like outline appeared over the port beam. At nine o'clock the sky being clear, although softened by an ocean haze, the lofty mountains of the interior loomed among the clouds which hid their summits. We had been slowly skirting the southern part of the island past Portland Point, and about eleven o'clock began threading our way between treacherous coral reefs into the spacious harbor of Kingston. To the right as we approached Port Royal the wrecked Prinzessin Victoria Louise was seen but a short distance away, with her bow nearly submerged and her hull resting on the rocks. It is always sad to see a craft

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## *A Midwinter Cruise*

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undergoing slow process of dissolution, but especially so was it in the case of this beautiful sea-palace, thus untimely abandoned, in the prime of youth, to the elements which she had at one time seemed so capable of withstanding. Farther to the right resting high on the beach at low tide the second victim of the fleet, Prinz Waldemar, lay rust-covered but otherwise apparently uninjured.

From the hurricane deck on that beautiful day, the 19th of February, Kingston and its environs presented a memorable picture. Landward, a rather monotonous conglomeration of bricks and white coral masonry was seen, relieved by occasional patches of green. The surface gradually rises as it recedes from the shore, when it becomes dotted with more scattered buildings, then come the green foot hills with valleys thickly wooded and finally the mountains towering grandly in the hazy distance. Behind us lay the wide land-locked bay with the sea beyond dancing in the glittering tinsel of eternal summer.

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## *The American Tropics*

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Lest the third victim should be added in a harbor rendered extremely hazardous from the great earthquake which had not wholly subsided, we moved with great caution, and, nearing the Palisadoes and the palm-bordered extremity of Port Royal, the first evidences of the recent great earthquake were seen. Palms half submerged, their fronds withering, showed where the earth's crust had sunken. We rounded this point, which is a coral reef projecting from the mainland where the ancient city stood, and reached our dock at noon. The town is situated on a low, level beach extending backward about a mile to where the land merges into the foot hills and beyond towers the Green Mountain Range, its topmost peak being 7,500 feet, the highest in Jamaica. The formation suggests a huge amphitheatre.

Jamaica, the largest of the British West Indies, is one hundred and forty-four miles long, fifty in width, and contains four thousand and one hundred and ninety-three square

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## *A Midwinter Cruise*

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miles. It was discovered by Columbus in 1494 and has been in the possession of England since 1655. The island is mainly noted for its luxuriant tropical vegetation. Being mountainous, the climate and its flora naturally vary according to the elevation. From its easy communication with the United States it is a favorite winter resort for many Americans.

There is a heavy yearly rainfall which furnishes numerous springs and streams from which it derives not only its vernal characteristics, but also its name, Xaymaca, an Indian word signifying the land of woods and waters. Its present population is about 700,000, less than 15,000 of whom are white.

Kingston, the capital and main, though not the oldest, city, had a population before the earthquake of 45,000, but at the time of my visit many had taken refuge in other parts of the island. It is known to have suffered at least two severe earthquakes and numerous cyclones. Of the former the most not-



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## *The American Tropics*

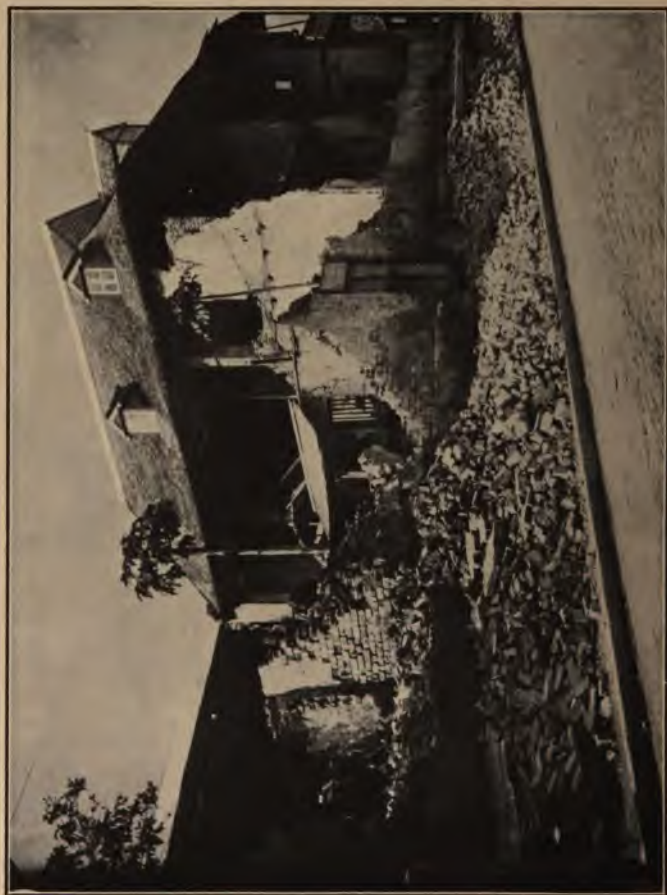
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able was that of 1692, when part of Port Royal on which the city stood was submerged. It is claimed that on certain days when the water is clear, some of the old city with its dwellings, churches, warehouses and forts may still be seen, but this, like the native rum, must be taken with due conservatism. The last great terrestrial disturbance occurred on the fourteenth of January, 1907, falling like a death blow to the already moribund island—moribund from a sociological and commercial point of view. It is generally admitted, however, that with the completion of the Panama Canal conditions in the West Indies will improve, and in no place more than Jamaica.

The recent earthquake was described by quite an intelligent cab-driver—called here buggyman. The inquiry of my friend the doctor, "Had the people of Jamaica any premonition of the impending disaster?" did not elicit an immediate reply, whereupon the Columbia professor, noticing the pause, in-





AFTER THE EARTHQUAKE, KINGSTON.

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## *A Midwinter Cruise*

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terpreted: "Did you have any warning of the quake before it came?" This had the desired effect and he sketched it substantially thus: "I was sittin' 'ere hin my buggy commin' from railway station. Took a fare for de tree 'clock train, sah, and had got along just over dar [pointing with his whip] w'en hall of a suddint the 'orse stumble and I see pavement movin' hup and' down, sah, an' I know it earthquake for sure." He further said that the few dwellings around him tottered and their walls began to fall. From the business part of the town there was a rumbling noise like distant thunder with rising clouds of dust. This lasted about a minute, or it might have been less, but it seemed a long time—so long, he said, he thought it would never stop.

As described by a merchant who was seated in his counting-house on one of the busy streets: "It came suddenly just as I was sitting at my desk talking with a customer; everything became shaky and the

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## *The American Tropics*

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walls crumbled and fell about our heads, with blinding, suffocating dust. I groped my way to the street uninjured, but found it almost impossible to find my way, nor did I know where to go. Fortunately I remained in the center of the street until it was over and the dust cleared sufficiently for me to pick my way to a place of safety, away from the tottering buildings. Soon a fire broke out, and the fire department, crippled as it was, could do little to control it. The man or woman severely injured or caught in the ruins had no chance."

The work of rescue was still going on at the time of our visit. A roadway in the center of the street had been cleared but nothing habitable or in any way serviceable was seen. Some fled to churches, the most unsafe of all places, for of the churches of Kingston but a single spire was left and it showed the struggle through which it had passed.

Kingston was paralyzed, as well it might

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## *A Midwinter Cruise*

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be, its people, half-crazed with fear, were startled anew from day to day by the quivering earth. In the midst of this, pandemonium was suddenly let loose by the boom of cannon and many thought the foundations of the world had given way. But it was only Davis's guns giving the Government salute as the United States cruiser "Dixie," laden with relief supplies, entered the bay on her mission of peace and mercy.

As elsewhere intimated, John Bull in cloudland on his native turf and in a congenial setting is one of the most companionable of men. But removed from the subdued light and cool air of merrie England and placed in the glare of the tropics, my experience is that he becomes the most crotchety bundle of nerves imaginable. And on this occasion, as far as one can ascertain, there was developed a pronounced incompatibility between the American Captain with all good intentions and his bluster and noise, and the overwrought Governor of the strick-

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## *The American Tropics*

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en island, probably possessing an over-sensitized conservatism. The result was misunderstanding and, somewhere, an appalling blunder.

The conditions existing some weeks later the camera can best portray for little but ruins remained of the erstwhile prosperous and beautiful town. In our ramblings we found that about half of the Post-office building had been left standing and was still utilized by the Post-office department. Across the way an extemporized souvenir shop did a thriving business. In the center of the city stood the prison with its high, brick-walled enclosure. Both the prison and the outer-yard walls suffered severely from the shock. On this account much apprehension was felt by the inhabitants immediately after the earthquake lest the inmates should escape—as it was reported they were doing. Captain Davis landed and marched his marines directly to this point, restored order and rendered such other aid as the situation



ANOTHER KINGSTON INSTANCE.



1. The first part of the document is a list of names and titles, including "The Hon. Mr. Justice" and "The Hon. Mr. Justice".

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## *A Midwinter Cruise*

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seemed to call for, until informed by the Governor that his services were not needed, in words even less diplomatic but to that effect.

The panic subsiding the inhabitants were finally encamped in two main settlements in the suburbs. An attractive drive outside the town leads to this city of tents; farther on we passed the barracks, now rendered useless by falling masonry and breaks in the walls, and turning, the road leads to the beautiful grounds of the Governor's Palace, at that time the residence of Governor Swettenham. Just as we approached the Palace a heavy shower, or more properly speaking downpour, came without warning as occurs at times in the tropics, and caused everyone to skelter for cover. Our driver halted under a large outspreading tree, but the colored sentry at the steps invited us to drive under the broad porte cochere.

The Governor was "not at home" as the Palace was not considered safe for habitation

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## *The American Tropics*

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and he and his family resided in a tent in the rear. The sentry wearing his Majesty the King's uniform was inclined to be loquacious while glancing furtively at a coverless cigar box with a few coins on the bottom which sat on a stool near the visitor's book of registry. Among other things, he said the Governor's family was sitting in a room adjoining the dining saloon when the shock came; none were seriously injured although much broken glass and plaster fell around them. As in other West Indian isles belonging to Britain the grounds surrounding the Governor's Palace are rendered attractive more from the broad expanse covered with an exuberant growth of tropical verdure than from any special beauty of the buildings.

After the morning's drive it was an agreeable change to draw up at the Constant Spring Hotel, which is six miles from Kingston and connected with the city by a tramline. The hotel is a large rambling struc-

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## *A Midwinter Cruise*

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ture with attractive grounds, facing a broad savanna. From the cupola majestic prospects lie outspread. There is always something restful in a well-conducted English inn, and both restful and refreshing this one seemed to be though far removed from its parent stem. Something more than refreshing, however, was the rum fizz flavored with native limes which was served on the broad veranda. The luncheon was like many other luncheons and made us even more appreciative of our own ship's larder. This building suffered considerably from the earthquake, one corner with tons of masonry fell away, rendering that part of the hotel unfit for use. Everywhere cracked walls and plaster told of the shaking up it had had.

Returning to Kingston on a tram-car we encountered the most accommodating conductor we had seen since leaving Port of Spain, and like his fellow workmen in Trinidad he was not only white but an Englishman thoroughly baked and brown. Seeing that

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## *The American Tropics*

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we were on the lookout, camera in hand, he offered to hold the car should we wish to take any views—and he actually did it without our asking. Did I say the Briton in the tropics is intolerable? Well, I know at least two who are not.

There is little to detain the tourist in Kingston, but two or three weeks may be spent comfortably in driving, touring or walking over the Island—provided one likes to walk in warm weather. One of the most interesting places, as well as the oldest in Jamaica, is Spanish Town, which was founded in 1630 and called San Jago de la Vega. Like many Spanish names this proved too formidable for the English-speaking buccaneers, who re-christened it as indicated. These daring old sea dogs seemed to have braved everything until they encountered the Spanish language—this they never mastered. The seat of government was formerly here and the light pink-colored King's house and other public buildings formerly

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## *A Midwinter Cruise*

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occupied by the colonial officials still remain in good preservation. The streets are short and to reach any point numerous turns must be made. The Cathedral is probably the most interesting place of all and its interior well repays a visit. It presents a modern exterior, for part of its walls, as also spire and roof, are of comparatively recent construction. It was originally built by the Spaniards in 1523 as the Church of the Red Cross, but was nearly destroyed in 1655. In its restoration, unfortunately, it was greatly modernized, although the crypt bears evidences of age. It probably is entitled to the distinction attaching to the oldest building on the island, and, excepting the cathedrals of Cartagena and Havana, the oldest church on the American Continent. Formerly Roman Catholic, it is now Anglican and contains the remains of some of Jamaica's illustrious dead. I read the epitaphs on several slabs in the crypt dated as far back as 1640. Here is one more legible than others:

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## *The American Tropics*

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"Here lies Sir Thomas Lynch at ease and blest;  
Would you know more ye world will speak ye  
rest."

It is a satisfaction to think of Sir Thomas thus comfortably provided for despite his name, though of many of his compeers one finds no such assuring statement, nor does history offer any plea in their behalf. On the contrary "ye world" does not speak in the highest terms of the average seventeenth century buccaneer. In the streets of Spanish Town and Port Royal were found, according to Byron Edwards, "the most ungodly people on the face of the earth." But while virtue usually meets its just reward, so also does vice, and whether Sir Thomas Lynch had a hand in it or not, we know that those not executed on Gallows Point by one of their own number, Morgan, after he was knighted by the grace of Charles the Second, slid off into the sea with the earthquake of 1692, and were thus more decently if not more summarily exterminated.

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## *A Midwinter Cruise*

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The active slave trade between the West Indies and the west coast of Africa tended likewise to give a bad name to the chief ports where the slavers discharged their cargoes. It is estimated that more than 600,000 slaves were landed at Port Royal between 1680 and 1786.

As a reminder of the active contention which in the seventeenth century existed between England, Spain, France and Holland, stands Rodney's statue flanked by cannon taken from the Ville de Paris to commemorate his victory over De Grasse who commanded the French fleet in 1781. There is a neat looking inn in Spanish Town, the Rio Cobre, near the river of the same name, where one is presented on entering with baskets of oranges and other tropical fruits. But we tarried only long enough to secure a buggyman with a superannuated horse to drive to the celebrated "Bog-Walk" a corruption of Boca del Aqua, mouth of the waters. Of the picturesque drives I can re-



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## *The American Tropics*

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call, none surpasses in point of beauty, and what Germans would call *gemüthlichkeit*, the Bog-Walk of Jamaica. The "Hobby Drive" on the north coast of Devon; the long sweeps of the Yellowstone with their trails of dust; that between Sorrento and Castellammare bordering the Bay of Naples; the "Prince of Wales' Drive" from the Lakes of Killarney to Glengariff and many others have their charms; some are beyond description and each has some feature peculiar to itself, but the drive of nine miles along the Rio Cobre River from Spanish Town to the Natural Bridge, the Gorge, and beyond to the railway station, is unmatched outside Jamaica and must be seen to be fully appreciated. The roadway is macadamized with white coral, and for the first few miles trim cottages and farm-houses surrounded with forests of bananas are passed. Then the *lignum vitae*, the wood of life, bearing beautiful blue flowers and wood which is used to make policemen's clubs, may be seen on the



IRRIGATION DITCH, BOG WALK, SPANISH TOWN.

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## *A Midwinter Cruise*

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roadside. We drove over a rapid-flowing stream, an irrigation ditch, the driver called it, with its banks lined with palms. Clumps of flowering orchids and numerous other plants enlivened the scene with a blaze of blossom. Maiden-hair ferns in great profusion and giant ferns from eight to ten feet high, the wild passion flower, the hibiscus and primrose, the wild convolvulus and the iris, are seen everywhere. Through this junglewood of bloom we came to deep defiles with overhanging rocks of coral draped in the rank luxuriance of the tropics. As a climax to this beauty streak of nature comes the natural bridge of coral rock hung with vines and flowering plants, forming an arch of strength and beauty sixty feet above the waters of the Rio Cobre which it spans. At this point the river is narrow and swift-flowing. Returning, a punk or flat-bottomed boat may be secured on which to drift down the stream.

Numerous other excursions with the bug-

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## *The American Tropics*

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gyman may be taken; those to the hill towns or stations as they are called, are somewhat fatiguing, but offer an opportunity of seeing some striking scenery and the diversified flora of both the temperate and torrid zones. Newcastle, the most spoken of, is the Jamaican Military Sanitorium and contains the Hill Station cantonments where the few troops on the island must spend part of the time, because of its healthful climate. The rank and file of the army finds this a doleful place, and as most of the colored troops of the line are immune to anything the torrid zone can produce, it is not spoken of with enthusiasm by the West Indian Tommy Atkins.

Of greater interest, however, and more easily reached, are the celebrated Castleton and Hope Gardens, the former being the Governments' greatest botanic station for the cultivation of tropical trees. It is situated on the Wag-Water River (formerly Aqua Alta), and as it is only nineteen

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## *A Midwinter Cruise*

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miles from Kingston it may be reached by the buggyman. It contains much of the tropical growth we had seen elsewhere but with some additions which, with its careful arrangement and classification, entitle it to be considered, as it is, the botanist's paradise. This and the Hope Garden Reservation of two hundred acres near the foot-hills and the government Cinchona Plantation of one hundred and fifty acres, twenty-one miles from Kingston, offer a greater variety of vegetable life than can elsewhere be seen and even excels the horticultural collection at Port of Spain.

There are seven hundred miles of roadways in Jamaica leading to every place worth seeing and as they are excellent and the buggyman omnipresent, the most satisfactory way of seeing the Island, provided one has the time, is to secure the least objectionable of these creatures and follow the white streaks of macadam and one's own inclinations. In so doing you will look down

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## *The American Tropics*

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from mountain heights on yellow pastures of guinea grass three or four thousand feet below, and, descending, pass impenetrable forests and emerge into valleys fragrant with spicy odors and gorgeous with flowers. Again you will pass plantations, fruit farms, sweet-smelling pimento groves and foul-smelling sugar mills. Or by following the chain of roads which encircle the Island you will cross roaring rivers dashing into foam as their waters meet the surf. At other places your road-way will be flanked on both sides with long rows of overhanging palms bowing gracefully. You may not know whether they are salaaming to you or to each other, but you will enjoy it, it all seems so oriental. Again you will see coffee plantations, orange orchards, and fields of the ever-present banana.

Of course the inns may not hold out strong inducements to this mode of travel and the buggyman may be a land pirate, but these are only minor inconveniences which may

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## *A Midwinter Cruise*

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be reduced to a minimum if one has a bicycle, or better, an automobile. With a bicycle any inn will seem luxurious, and any bed a bed of eiderdown; besides you will not be fettered to the jehu with a "rig;" while with an automobile you can add your quota of dust to uninviting inns, and halt only at the best places.

Railway lines connect Kingston with Mintego Bay on the northwest coast, a distance of one hundred and thirteen miles, Port Antonio on the north-east coast, seventy-five miles, and Ewarton in the center of the Island thirty miles from Kingston. The difficulties of railway construction in Jamaica are great, but the winding lines through rank vegetation, over mountains, through narrow defiles, and over high trestles make for the pleasure of the tourist and withal afford the quickest and most economical way of "doing" the Island. The railway carriages are a compromise between the English and American systems. There are first and sec-



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### *The American Tropics*

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ond class compartments and in place of the usual "smoker" there is a carriage near the engine, not with stationary seats, but with chairs and a table or two where one can enjoy fruit or liquid refreshments which may be ordered of the colored waitress in attendance. Securing a ticket at some of the smaller stations is quite a formidable affair, especially if there be many waiting and the purchasers have not the amount ready in the coin of the land, which is neither wholly English nor American, although American dollars are taken at their face value. The deliberate way in which the ticket seller conducts his affairs, however, insures him against any danger of nervous prostration from the mental strain of this monetary tangle. But the experienced know there is really no need of haste—for the train will wait.

Port Antonio has of late become a place of commercial importance on account of the American fruit traffic conducted here. In fact the place is almost wholly built up with

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## *A Midwinter Cruise*

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American capital. Because of this and the direct communication with New York and Boston, many Americans prefer Port Antonio to Kingston. There is further, to attract American patronage, a mammoth winter resort hotel, The Tichfield, conducted by Americans and similar to the resorts on the Atlantic seaboard of the United States. This building suffered but little during the recent earthquake, although cracked walls and plaster were sufficient to send many of its inmates skeltering homeward on the first steamers. The view from the Tichfield is superb. In the distance to the rear, the Blue Mountains blend with the soft azure of the sky, while stretching out in front is the broad expanse of the Caribbean Sea, blue as the indigo with which some of the craft, lazily sunning themselves in the offing, are probably laden.

The environs of Port Antonio are more primitive than those of the older town of Kingston. With a buggyman one can ex-

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## *The American Tropics*

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plore native jungles hiding huts built by the "wild men;" harmless they are, though in many respects similar to their kind beyond seas in Afric's sunny clime. There are no dangerous reptiles in Jamaica, which is comforting to the curious traveler. In fact while it excels in flora, its fauna is remarkably restricted, including only a few ingunas in the forests, lizards and alligators in stagnant swales and swamps, fresh water fishes in its rivers, and birds of various kinds, a few with beautiful plumage.

No better place than Jamaica can be selected for studying the so-called race question. For four hundred years the island has been dominated by white men, who at an early stage of its development, imported, doubtless much against their will, an alien race of blacks to serve as slaves. This enabled the main industries of the island to be developed, while it also created two distinct classes of society, the bondmen and their owners. The latter amassed wealth and

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## *A Midwinter Cruise*

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lived in affluence, building estates with "great houses" and spending much of their time and all of their money in Europe, mainly in the mother country, England. This may have been well for the capitals of Europe, but was debilitating to the infant colony. Then came the agitation for the liberation of slaves, and in 1775 Jamaica, or some part of it, petitioned the home government stating that "the trade to Africa for slaves is neither consistent with sound policy, the laws of nature, nor morality;" not until 1834, however, were the slaves liberated. For seventy years, therefore, the negro in Jamaica has enjoyed the advantages of freedom. During this time the exchequer has decreased as well as the relative size of the white population. The blacks, on the other hand, have not only multiplied with amazing rapidity, but a few of them have acquired a fair degree of understanding, and a still smaller number some capital. On the whole, then, the African is the gainer, having drawn

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## *The American Tropics*

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largely in the process of civilization from association with the European, and at the same time, judging from the number of mulattoes, has drawn a considerable amount of white blood into his veins. That he is capable of self-government or that he would be better under "home rule," no one, probably, who has observed the opera bouffe government of Haiti will admit.

The one thousand public and private schools of Jamaica, a few preparatory colleges and many churches, are slowly doing their work in the uplifting of the African race. That more effort is not required of the negro is securing a livelihood is against him. For high attainment or even the hope of attainment comes only through ages of toil. The church is more attractive to the negro than the school, but the benches of the latter are largely recruited from the former. For the benefit of the negro, therefore, it is to be hoped that matters will remain as they are; as for the white man in Jamaica, he be-

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## *A Midwinter Cruise*

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longs to a different zone, where generations of struggling ancestors have endowed him with the brains and brawn which make him the power among men that he is.

In spite of the natural beauty which attracts many to Jamaica, it was with feelings of relief that I saw our ship at sundown backing out of her slip at Kingston Harbor. Some apprehension had been felt for our safety, as almost daily tremors of the earth were felt. In the atmosphere of impending doom which pervaded the capital at the time, it was difficult to appreciate fully the prodigality with which nature has endowed the Island, while things terrestrial seemed so fleeting, so unstable, and the smile of the land, though fair, seemed like the smile of the siren which lures to ruin.

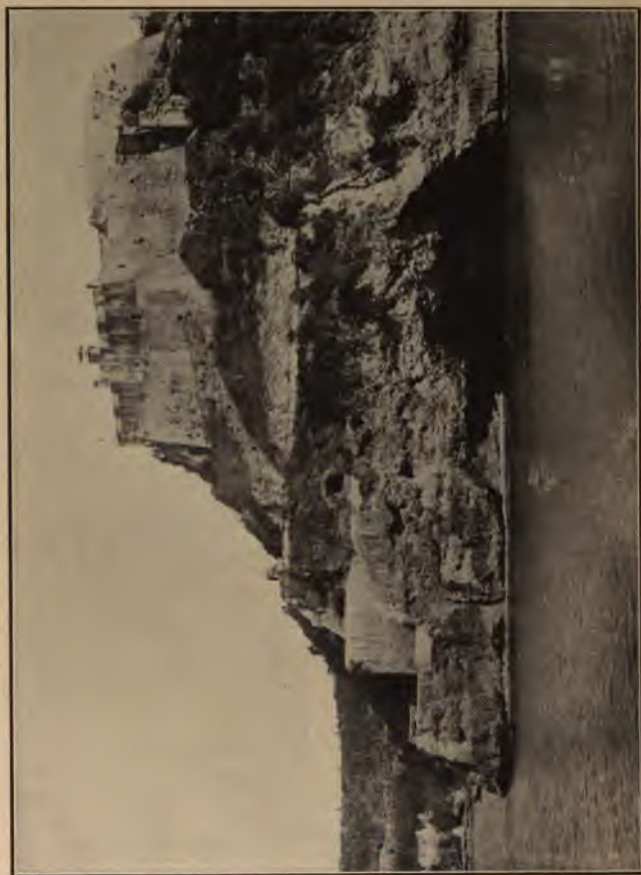
## CHAPTER VII.

ON clearing Kingston Harbor some beautiful sunset effects were seen. There had been few on the whole trip—none such as at times makes nightfall glorious in the north, but then it may not have been the season for beautiful sunsets. It is a night's run from Kingston to Santiago de Cuba and at daybreak the cloud-like outline of land was seen on our starboard side. The sky was overcast and it was much cooler, with a fresh wind, although the sea was calm. Ulsters were needed for the first time since warm weather was encountered, but as the sun rose they were soon discarded.

The entrance to Santiago Harbor is reached through a narrow channel, guarded to the right by El Morro (the promontory), a combination of mediaeval fortress and castle, and to the left by the rugged foothills of the Sierras. The place is of interest mainly from the memorable battle which occurred







EL MORRO, SANTIAGO.

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## *A Midwinter Cruise*

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there July 3rd, 1898, between the American squadron under Sampson and Schley and the Spanish flotilla commanded by Cervera, in which the latter was quickly demolished, terminating the war with Spain for the "liberation" of Cuba. As we lay facing the entrance awaiting the pilot, the pinkish-brown pile of masonry, lit up by the morning sun, surmounted by the castle, towered above us. About the only visible evidence of ill usage the fort has received during the four hundred years it has frowned alike on bold and timorous foe are the excavations or caverns in its rocky foundation made by the waves. To the left, surmounting the Sierra Maestro Range, stands Pico Turquino, eight thousand feet above the sea. We were disappointed in not seeing some relics of the vanquished squadron, they being strewn for forty miles westward along the coast. We lay to, however, sufficiently near to see the tower in which Hobson was imprisoned after the sinking of the "Merrimac" by himself

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## *The American Tropics*

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and seven brave companions on the 3rd of June, 1898, in an attempt to blockade the entrance to the harbor and to prevent Cervera's escape. It was in the most exposed rampart that Hobson was confined, and the commandant is said to have informed the American squadron that if they fired on the fort he would be the most exposed. As we passed the rock-ribbed fortress we could see at close range ramparts receding in tiers set off here and there with overhanging sentry boxes and winding stairways leading to the castle some two hundred feet above us. All seemed as old as the rock on which it stands, and picturesque beyond any fort we had seen. A second fortress smaller than the first and separated from it by a sand beach was passed, and the hills rose on both sides of the channel, reminding one of a miniature Hudson River scene for a distance of about four miles, when the channel broadens into a land-locked bay sufficiently large to accommodate several navies, provided

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## *A Midwinter Cruise*

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they are on friendly terms, and sufficiently deep to sink them without disturbing navigation should they conclude to disagree. To the right on a slope which terminates in the mountainous interior stands Santiago, the second city in size, and once the capital of Cuba, built by the Spaniards in 1514. We dropped anchor about a mile from shore and were soon in line, cameras in hand, ready to board the launches, but there was some delay, the officers at the bottom of the landing stairs stating that we must wait for the port medical officer. The sun grew hotter and still the perspiring line impatiently waited. Finally a naptha launch carrying the American flag drew up and there was a long conference between our ship's doctor and the port health officer. Then more delay until, finally, we were told that we were in quarantine. Forty days and forty nights shalt thou be unclean, according to the Mosaic law—but the length of segregation has become modified and now varies according to

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## *The American Tropics*

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the incubation period of the infective disease. We had, however, the satisfaction of knowing that we were in quarantine for yellow fever, the most deadly pestilence of the tropics. On the other hand, some of the more timorous became panic stricken; might not the disease break out at any moment, said one; might it not be already on the ship although concealed, ventured another. It is true we had called at infected posts and had embarked two passengers at Colon, which enjoys the distinction of being a veritable incubator of yellow fever. People began to realize that their color was unnaturally yellow and it was conspicuously apparent and had been for some time that all were more or less brown. But the panacea came; the ship was to be fumigated—and the effect was magical. Somewhere in the hold sulphur was burned; not much, for there was little need, but just enough to satisfy the law's demands and to quell the anxiety of the timorous. Henceforth we were clean from a

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## *A Midwinter Cruise*

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legal point of view, but not sufficiently clean to land at Santiago. No! that privilege was denied us, but we might be permitted to land at Havana, provided—Then we gazed long and longingly at the sunlit town, attractive in its reds and pinks and blues and yellows. With our glasses we could pick out the Cathedral with its towers, said to be the largest on the island, the Marine Park and the Plaza—the Plaza with its bandstand. Some of the larger, more modern buildings are of red brick covered with red tiles. We could even see the rows of cabs and the restless movements of their drivers. Fortunately we could not hear what they said, but their disappointment must have been keen—a harvest ripe and awaiting the sickle, devastated by hurricane and inundated by flood. The effect as we saw it was oriental, with a warmth of coloring in keeping with the atmosphere, which from its protected and basin-like surroundings was, as the sun reached the zenith,

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## *The American Tropics*

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hotter than was at all comfortable. Beyond the low range of hills behind the town we could see (with our mind's eye better than with our field glasses) San Juan Hill seamed by overgrown trenches and surmounted by a monument; and farther away El Caney with its dismantled block-house where now, we were told, enwrapped in sweet solitude the mocking bird trills his notes in an atmosphere of peace, and the husbandman turns soil once trod by the iron heel. Before sundown, however, we were handed the long-looked-for and long-whistled-for documents which permitted our departure according to the regulations of quarantine. Just why we were detained all day without being permitted to land or to proceed peacefully on our way, will, so far as the passengers are concerned, probably always remain one of the unsolved mysteries of uniformed officialdom.

Night was falling on the dismantled turrets of El Morro as we cleared the channel

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## *A Midwinter Cruise*

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and put out to sea. Our course lay eastward past Daiguiri (twenty miles) where Shafter landed our troops for the invasion of Cuba, which in turn resulted in the dislodgment of Cervera; and twenty miles farther we passed Guantanamo where at anchor, like faithful war dogs of the sea, lay the Atlantic squadron, blinking at us with eyes of fire. It may be of interest to recall that this harbor was given us for the assistance rendered Cuba in her struggle for "freedom." It is the finest land-locked harbor on the south coast and rivals Nipe on the north, being from half a mile to four miles wide and ten miles long. As a strategic point, especially after the completion of the great Panama Canal, it can hardly be excelled. Adjoining, shrouded in the sable mantle of night, are the Cobre, or Copper, Mountains, reputed to be rich in mineral wealth, especially iron and copper; and not far off are the rich timber lands and the most productive coffee plantations of Cuba.



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## *The American Tropics*

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We began to realize that we were leaving the tropics; the air was cool and as we sat on deck long into the night wraps and ulsters were not uncomfortable. Finally the Faro Concha light on Cape Maisi, the easternmost tip of Cuba, about one hundred miles from Santiago, was sighted and we left the night watch at four bells trusting the ship's officers to round the point, or more properly double the cape, safely. Some were disappointed in not being able to proceed to Havana by rail, but most of us were quite content, accepted the inevitable with easy grace, and were soon lulled to sleep by the great rhythmic throbs of the ship's heart.

The distance from Cape Maisi to Havana is far greater than I had realized and all of the following day our course stood northwest with an occasional headland or mountain in the interior of Cuba peeping over our port rail. The island is 760 miles long by 135 miles at its widest part and has an area of 43,300 square miles, with a population

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## *A Midwinter Cruise*

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of 1,500,000 or less. The northern coast is known to be almost uniformly low and flat, indented by numerous bays and dotted with 570 islands or coral keys; while on the south coast there is a veritable galaxy of islets which number 730—the Isle of Pines being the largest with an area of 1,214 square miles. The sail from Santiago to Havana, by way of Faro Concha lighthouse, takes more than two nights and a day, and it was not until nine o'clock of the second day that El Morro of Havana was sighted and at ten we entered the harbor between Morro Castle and the Punta Battery, steamed past Fort Cabanas and the sunken “Maine” and dropped anchor in the land-locked bay. It is not many years since Havana became the Mecca of southern tourists. Previous to this the island seemed almost as remote as Spain itself and quite as foreign. The transformation wrought by the American occupation during the past few years has largely been directed toward sanitation—of which the

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### *The American Tropics*

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place stood much in need. Those who recall the Havana of a decade or two ago would be surprised at her cleanliness and the absence of odors which formerly greeted the new arrival. From time immemorial the Cuban capital has been associated with the idea of disagreeable olfactory sensations and dreaded epidemics. It was formerly said that ships required no pilot, as the navigator in entering had but to follow his nose, and its deadly miasms were known to be more formidable to the unacclimated, whether friend or foe, than Spanish bayonets or El Morro's guns. With this condition acting as a constant menace to our shores, the problem of the American Government next in importance after establishing peace and, apparently, a stable government, was, as in the case of Panama, to purge the place of its plague spots by modern sanitation. That this is no sinecure will be apparent when one considers that the soil on which the town is built is saturated with the refuse of cen-

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## *A Midwinter Cruise*

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turies, and the stagnant harbor has been a dumping pool for four hundred years. But Havana the beautiful has washed her face and at least looks clean, and the sea breezes which sweep over the town and stir up the white dust, are no longer befouled by emanations of decomposing and decomposed matter. The task of reconstruction, or rather of construction, has just begun, for while an abundance of pure water now flows into the capital there is no adequate system of sewage for a city of, say, about 250,000 inhabitants, and the muck-bottomed bay awaits only the opportunity to yield up in abundance from its storehouse of infection. But to the average tourist the quaint, almost uncomfortable hotels are just as they were of yore, excepting that their prices are higher, and while the house-cleaning process has possibly rendered Havana less picturesque, yet quite enough remains of the *laissez faire* to satisfy the most ardent mediaevalist.

The city was founded in 1519 on a spa-

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## *The American Tropics*

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cious land-locked harbor which afforded a safe haven at a time when typhoons were not the greatest danger encountered on the high seas. The scene of strife from the beginning, it has ever since participated in the varying fortunes of war. In the last half of the sixteenth century the Spaniards began the erection of Morro Castle and the Bateria de la Punta on the opposite entrance to the harbor to defend the city against the invasions of the French, English and Dutch. It had previously been reduced to ashes by the buccaneers in 1528 and sacked by Sores the pirate in 1556. These fortifications were not completed in their present form until 1625. Fort Cabanas dates from a later period (1762), and was erected because of the taking of El Morro by the English.

No city of the American continent is richer in historic interest than Havana. It was selected by Ocampo in 1508 as a careening harbor or natural dry dock for his ships, hence the name "habana," haven. From

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## *A Midwinter Cruise*

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here Cortes set out in 1519 on his voyage of conquest to Mexico, and from this port Pamphilo de Narvaez sailed in 1528 for Florida, where he was followed eleven years later by DeSoto, who traveling westward in search of El Dorado, the mythical land of gold, discovered the Mississippi River instead and was drowned therein. In 1762 the English, assisted by the Colonial troops from New York and New England, captured the city, but it was returned to Spain the following year in exchange for Florida.

Originally Havana was a walled city, but the town has far outgrown its stone girdle, now for the most part demolished. Remnants of the old wall may still be seen in the Plaza de Armas, near the prison, and in the rear of the post-office stands the oldest fortress, constructed in 1558. The space within this once walled enclosure may be recognized by its narrow winding streets, while in the newer parts broad thoroughfares and gardens render the locality more salubrious

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## *The American Tropics*

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as a place of residence. The buildings are of stone with a plentiful use of marble, one or two stories high, with iron-grated windows, some (without glass) much like those in other Spanish towns. The Cathedral erected by the Jesuits in 1724 possesses some claim to architectural beauty, but it is in such close proximity to other buildings that it does not appear to advantage. It is mainly noted, however, for its interior and the niche in which the remains of Columbus are supposed to have rested from the time of their removal from Santo Domingo in 1796 to their final departure for Seville in 1899. It is now thought that the bones of Columbus still repose in the Cathedral at Santo Domingo, and those of his son, Don Diego, were removed by mistake and deposited in the Cathedral at Havana. Tacon Market, erected in 1836, is an imposing structure and the Tacon Theatre, built two years later, has a seating capacity of 3,000. These structures were named in honor of General Miguel Ta-



THE CATHEDRAL, HAVANA.





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## *A Midwinter Cruise*

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con who was Governor of Cuba from 1834 to 1838. The bull ring and the cock-pit still furnish the most popular amusements of the Cubans, although jailai has a firm hold on the public taste and rivals base-ball in our country. Tram-cars traverse the city, and take one through the narrowest, most tortuous streets to the delightful suburb of Cerro, the most beautiful street in Havana, lined with attractive villas and gardens, as well as to Vedado, Marianao and the Cuban cemetery.

The cabs of Havana (and those of Naples) are in a class by themselves. At one time, it is said, they numbered 6,000, and even now with the modern competition of the electric tram, they are as plentiful as mosquitoes in New Jersey and their charges vary according to circumstances—from twenty-five cents to all the money the passenger chances to have with him. As in all Spanish-American cities it is useful to have some practical knowledge of the Spanish language—or at least a few words in your vest pocket,

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## *The American Tropics*

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so to speak, to utilize in case of necessity. Boarding a tram-car one night to return to our ship, we were in doubt regarding the route the car was taking; soon, plunging into narrow, winding streets, our orientation became still more uncertain and we consulted the conductor who evidently considered it of sufficient importance to think about, but would not hazard a reply on the spur of the moment. Soon the whole car seemed to be deeply interested in our needs—I tried boat, ship, steamer, bateau, schiff and dampfer, but everybody gave it up. It was a conundrum, of course, but new to them. The word vapor would have relieved our anxiety long before the turn which brought us out on the quay in full view of our objective point.

While there are numerous small plazas ornamented by statues, the Parque Isabel, now called Parque Central, is the fashionable center of the city. Here the band plays and the people take the air. The Prado and the Paseo de Tacon, leading from the center





IN THE SHOPPING DISTRICT, HAVANA.

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of the city to the Punta and more recent Malacon, at the west entrance to the harbor, is the most pretentious boulevard and follows the line of the old city wall. Here, too, or close by, are the principal hotels and places of amusement, together with the Government buildings and the residence of the Governor-general, with a fine statue of Columbus in the courtyard. Farther on is the Malacon overlooking the harbor entrance and the sea. In the Plaza de Armas there is a statue of Ferdinand VII. The shopping streets, Obsispo, O'Reilly and Obrapia lead off from the Prado and are so narrow that awnings are stretched across the street affording a shade and conspicuous places for signs. Mantillas, embroideries, fans and Panama hats are the articles most purchased by tourists. The best Panama hat bought on the trip was procured here for \$35.00. The best bargain counters are found in the markets, where every commodity is displayed for sale. Of the hospitals the St.

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## *The American Tropics*

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Lazaro for lepers is most noted. It was founded in 1861 by a leper who left his fortune as a perpetual endowment to the institution. The property thus endowed, I was told, has since enhanced greatly in value. I first visited the hospital in 1891 in company with Dr. Burgess, then the American Consul. A marked change has taken place since that time. Instead of being an asylum, as it then was, it has taken on more of the air of an institution for treating and caring for the disease with modern methods. Formerly segregation was not compulsory and of the estimated two hundred lepers in the city at the time of my first visit, but eighty-seven were in the St. Lazaro.

The wealth of the island is derived mainly from sugar and tobacco, while grazing is carried on to a certain extent. Tobacco is grown mainly in the Provinces of Pinar del Rio, Havana and Santa Clara, in the western end of the island. A comparatively small acreage, however, (100,000 out of a total of

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## *A Midwinter Cruise*

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28,000,000) is devoted to its production. The finest quality is grown in the Vuelta Abajo district, which covers an area of about ninety miles in length by ten in width. The average yearly crop for the whole island is about 62,173,800 pounds, with a total valuation of more than \$22,000,000.

. In Havana there are many of pure Castilian blood, but throughout the island there is a more general mingling of races. Unlike many of the islands we had visited the population of Cuba is preponderatingly white or nearly so, only about a third being unmistakably black. The aborigines, the Indians, have as a race been exterminated. That their blood, mingled with that of the African and the Spaniard, contributes to form the typical Cuban is apparent to the most superficial ethnologist. A distinct contrast is observed between the Cuban and the Barbadian, much to the disparagement of the former. In both there is the same admixture of European blood with the native and the



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negro, but the European from the north is quite a different individual from the fierce-eyed being who ranges from the fastnesses of the Pyrenees to the sunny slopes of the Mediterranean. Of course there are fine, cultured people in Havana, far more than elsewhere on the island, but I am writing of the prevailing types. The Cuban bears a strong resemblance to his brother encountered on the north-eastern spur of the Andes, and whether he can ever be induced to conform to the usages of the United States, with which he is now so closely identified, is a question for time to answer. To the casual observer it seems that he needs, as in Mexico and other Latin-American Countries, a ruler with a strong arm and an iron heel. Cuba has had strong rulers with powers despotic, but none who ruled for Cuba and the Cubans.

When Columbus first landed on the island, which he named Juana, he remarked on the gold ornaments worn by the natives which excited the cupidity of his followers. They

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## *A Midwinter Cruise*

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were given to understand that it came from "Cubanacan" in the interior, and Cubanacan, since abbreviated Cuba, has been until quite recently the land to which the favorites of the Spanish crown have gone in quest of gold. For four hundred years everything in Cubanacan has been subordinate to her revenue, the bulk of which has been transported to the source of power in Madrid. But a new era for Cuba has come, hopes long deferred may now be realized and possibilities arise which heretofore have been only dreamed of.

We were to leave at noon; the town and shipping in the bay were gay with flags and bunting, the people were in holiday attire, for it was the 24th of February. From forts and a thousand housetops fluttered the flag with a single star. All excepting those intending to stop over were again on board. The band struck up the Cuban national air and as the clocks on shore were heard striking the hour of twelve, the guns from El

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## *The American Tropics*

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Morro and Cabanas let loose followed by those of the "Pilgrim" and the "Dixie." As their smoke cleared away we swung slowly around the twisted mass of iron which is all that remains of the "Maine," steamed past the roaring batteries of Morro and Punta and put to sea.

"Cuba libre" is a reality and this festive display and commotion in commemoration of her day of freedom did not impress us as a formal and soulless holiday, but, rather as one which actually responded to popular feeling. And with this thought we left her.

## CHAPTER VIII.

TO the Bahama Islands belongs the distinction of having been the first land sighted by Columbus in the New World; a further and less proud claim to fame is furnished by their record as a rendezvous of unsavory pirates for more than a century. First occupied by the English in 1629, they were mainly held by the buccaneers until after the American War of Independence. Furthermore they afforded an asylum for the Loyalists, or those Colonists whose sympathies were with the crown in the American Revolution, and finally they sprang into prominence as a refuge for blockade runners and others during the American Civil War. At present they are scarcely known, with the exception of New Providence, which has become a winter resort for Americans. Stretching south-eastward from the Florida coast for a distance of nearly seven hundred miles, they form an Atlantic barrier to the Mexican Gulf and

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## *The American Tropics*

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finally merge into the Antillean chain. In number they exceed three thousand although not more than forty have, so far as is known, ever been inhabited.

The largest of the group is Andros Island which is ninety miles long by twenty to forty miles wide and contains about five hundred square miles—the smallest has never been named. There are many small islets, called cays, and others still more diminutive which must remain content with the generic term of rocks. Andros Island, in common with others of the group, is low, swampy, thickly wooded and is intercepted by the only fresh water streams and lakes found in the Bahamas. These abound in ducks and other wild fowl, and the island would be a sportsman's paradise were it not for the mosquitoes, compared with which their Jersey cousins are said to be silken-winged messengers of peace. The greater part is still unexplored, and the negroes have a superstition that the wooded interior is

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## *A Midwinter Cruise*

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inhabited by "Yahoos" or wild Indians. Its present population is about 3,400. We saw Andros and a few small islets from a distance the day after leaving Havana, and her coral strand, reflecting the noon-day sun, shone white and glistening. Soon after the island of New Providence appeared under our bows and at one o'clock we dropped anchor about a mile from Nassau under the protection of a narrow coral reef known locally as Hog Island.

While there are many larger islands none are of so much importance as New Providence. Its name was bestowed by an Englishman, probably a native of the Isle of Man, Captain William Sayle, who, in 1667, was driven from his course by a severe storm and instead of landing at Carolina, whither he was bound, he found himself among the treacherous reefs of the Bahamas. He succeeded in finding a protected anchorage and landed on an island which he named in commemoration of his deliverance, Prov-

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## *The American Tropica*

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idence, and to distinguish it from other places of the same name on the Atlantic seaboard, the prefix, New, was afterward added. That many of the islands had previously been named made no appreciable difference either to the Spaniards who discovered them or to the English who colonized them. The Bahamas were called Lucayos by the native Indians, while even the San Salvador of the Spaniards is now known by the less euphonious term of Watlings Island. The escape of Captain Sayle from New Providence was more providential than he seemed to realize, for it was infested by pirates of the worst description. On returning to England he gave so favorable an account of the islands, which at that time were not claimed by any of the powers, that Charles II gave them to certain noblemen called Proprietary Lords, who for half a century attempted their colonization. Finally, after years of contention and bloodshed, the pirates capitulated on receiving promise of the royal pardon. But

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## *A Midwinter Cruise*

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while many of their numerous descendents remained to build up the infant colony, the unbridled life of adventure proved too alluring for such notorious free-booters as Vane and Teach, who soon took to the high seas and resumed their former occupation. Edward Teach, who was the real Blackbeard of the castle at St. Thomas, had the reputation among those who knew him of being His Satanic Majesty incarnate, and many stories of his insatiable cruelty are still extant. Teach's fourteenth wife is said to have been the beautiful sixteen-year-old daughter of a Carolina planter, and was treated so cruelly that even his crew would have remonstrated had they dared. It is comforting to know, even at this late date, that Teach's head and long black whiskers finally graced the bowsprit of Lieutenant Maynard's sloop when it landed in Virginia on November 21, 1717.

New Providence possesses the only harbor for ships drawing as much as fifteen feet



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### *The American Tropics*

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of water and is the island on which Nassau, the capital of the Bahamas, named in honor of the Hanoverian Dynasty and the oldest as well as the largest town of the whole island galaxy, is situated. It is about twenty miles long by five miles wide, and in its some eighty-five square miles of territory contains a fourth of the entire population of the group. There is a marked difference between the mountainous islands of volcanic formation we had previously seen and these low-lying coral reefs, the highest bluff of which is not more than one hundred and thirty feet above the sea. Nassau, containing about 1,400 inhabitants, one-fifth of whom call themselves white, is prettily situated on the north side of the island on a gentle slope embedded in tropical green. The most noticeable objects are the two large hotels, the Royal Victoria and the Colonial, and around them is concentrated the real, active life of the place. The former was built in 1860 by the Colonial Government to accommodate

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### *A Midwinter Cruise*

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the influx of "guests" during the conflict between the blue and the gray. During this time, when the ports of the southern states were closed to commerce, Nassau, being an English port, and only a hundred and seventy-five miles from the Florida coast, was the scene of unwonted activity. Not since the boisterous days of the buccaneers had the old town been the center of such lavish "prosperity." At this time it is said fortunes were quickly made and "the Bahama treasury overflowed with gold." The Colonial deficit which had been augmented year by year until it amounted to £47,786 in 1860 was soon wiped out, and according to Stark, the rich and dashing men in gray were the social lions of the day and were courted and feted by the high dignitaries of both church and state. With the fall of the Southern Confederacy in 1865 New Providence settled into her accustomed tranquility. Some say even that a reaction followed from which she has never fully recovered. It is known,

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## *A Midwinter Cruise*

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however, that she was visited the following year by a destructive hurricane which uprooted fruit trees, devastated plantations and wrecked shipping. At the present time it is generally admitted that the Bahamas are not enjoying the highest state of prosperity; but this can be readily accounted for upon consideration of the ethnological drift of the inhabitants, who, while not wholly reverted to the original type of the majority, yet present a compromise which is not conducive to the greatest thrift and highest material success.

On landing, the quaint streets with their diminutive shops were soon alive with tourists. The Colonial Hotel, the only one open at the time, was the objective point for almost every one. It is under American management and presents a most attractive appearance. Situated near the water, with broad verandas, surrounded by tropical gardens in the highest state of cultivation, it must be a delightful harbor of refuge to

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## *A Midwinter Cruise*

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those dwellers in the northland who wish to escape the rigors of winter or long for a glimpse of real sunshine. But more attractive than the odd, orderly streets, the sponge market or the fruit vender's carts was the huge ceiba or silk-cotton tree which stands in Court-house Square. It was not the tallest but certainly the most striking specimen of tropical flora we had seen.

There are many things to entertain the visitor at Nassau, boating, driving, golfing, or sitting tranquilly in the shade just breathing the air. That last mentioned seems to be the most popular recreation of the real Bahamains, those long inured to the perennial sun. Into this dream-like existence one from the busy, work-a-day world may come with both pleasure and profit. Of course every one visits the Sea Gardens and on a dark night the Waterloo or Fire Lake is considered one of the wonders of the place. "Only a dollar, Sir! and if you don't feel you've got yer money's worth, or if I don't

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## *The American Tropics*

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show you everything I'll give back y'r money, Sir!" With these assurances—repeated with various modifications until the small glass-bottomed boat was full—who could fail to see these natural marine wonders? A steam launch makes the trip in about an hour. They are certainly worth seeing and in coloring are more striking than those of Catalina Island off the coast of southern California. The latter, in common with the flora of the Pacific slope, presents a more vigorous growth. The schools of beautifully colored fish also seemed more plentiful in the marine gardens of the Pacific. When everyone was peering intently to catch the last view of what looked like a marine flower garden, we were startled to see a huge form, black as ebony, with blinking eyes, swimming across our field of view. The water was so transparent we could see plainly that it was a negro swimmer but "whar he cum fum" was not so apparent until he clambered over the side of

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## *A Midwinter Cruise*

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our boat, when we saw that it was our own man Friday, who, after the full complement of passengers had been secured, seemed to be the chief factotum of the boat. This was the final and most realistic touch of the Sea Gardens.

Of course everyone goes to the fruit plantation on Hog Island, where transportation and fruit ad libitum are furnished for the consideration of one shilling. "Take dis nice boat, Sah! Abraham Lincoln, dah an back wid all de awnges, pineapples an' cocoanuts yo' can eat, Sah! an' all fo' quawteh, Sah! Yo' make no mistake, Sah!"

A very conscientious friend tendered his quarter to Mr. Higgs, the proprietor of the plantation, as is the custom, spoke disparagingly of the small sum and almost remonstrated, saying that he should pay more as he had eaten so freely of fruit—in fact felt that he had eaten too much. "Oh, never mind," replied the incorruptible though laconic Mr. Higgs, "it's called Hog Island."

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## *The American Tropics*

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The second island in size is Abaco, which comprises in fact two islands, Great and Little Abaco, together with numerous adjacent islets or cays. Altogether they have an area of 496,700 acres, with a population somewhat greater than that of Andros. The main production is sisal grass, which is used as a substitute for hemp. Some cotton and pine-apples are likewise cultivated. Green Turtle Cay, with about 1,700 inhabitants, is the port of entry as well as the largest settlement on the island.

Abaco offers an interesting sociological proposition. The British Government gave the island to certain Loyalists as an indemnity for their plantations in the Carolinas which had been confiscated by the American Government. Many of these colonists were of Scotch birth, while a few Irish families were among them. After most of the dashing "sea-gentlemen" had been led to "Execution Dock," or otherwise exterminated, these islands had little or no communication

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## *A Midwinter Cruise*

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worth speaking of with the outside world. True to the traditions of his clan the "Un-speakable Scot" remained, and the son of Erin retained his brogue. They married and intermarried until at the present time the white inhabitants are all more or less related. It has been their pride, to which they have clung with the tenacity of their race, to keep the line of their descent free from the admixture of negro blood. This they have done for more than a century and a quarter, but unless outside aid come they will be as pebbles lost in the sands before many generations.

Nearer the Florida coast lies the small island of Benini, where tradition located the Fountain of Youth in search of which, you remember, Ponce de Leon accidentally discovered Florida, and instead of securing the means of perpetuity was killed by a poisoned arrow from the bow of an Indian.

Since the abolition of slavery in the Bahamas in 1834, many of the plantations in the



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## *The American Tropics*

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various islands have gone to waste, and fishing, sponge gathering and wrecking, to which both by tradition and inheritance the inhabitants incline most naturally, have been resorted to as a means of gaining a livelihood. A visitor relates that he once attended a prayer meeting on one of the islands, which promptly adjourned on hearing that a large yacht had foundered on a nearby reef. Instead of lending a helping hand in time of need the erstwhile devout fell to with all the wrecking instincts of their ancestors fully revived. It is further said that a strong opposition was encountered to the erection of lighthouses, as they interfered, it was alleged, with certain just and inalienable prerogatives, and deprived many from earning an honest living from the wrecks which an all-seeing Providence had brought to their shores—and they were of frequent occurrence among these treacherous reefs.

On sentimental grounds, probably the most interesting island of the Bahamas is Watlings

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## *A Midwinter Cruise*

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Island or what is thought to be the San Salvador of the Spaniards. It was here that Columbus first set foot on land and took formal possession of the new world in the name and under the banner of the sovereigns of Spain. The distance from Nassau is one hundred and eighty miles.

I was particularly fortunate in making the trip in a fast steam yacht. Ordinarily one must wait to catch a small freighter that occasionally makes a circuitous route stopping at various ports of call. But to go comfortably and quickly, that is quite a different thing. We steamed out of Nassau long before daybreak on the morning following our arrival and passed "our own boat" silently sleeping at her moorings. She had met with some derangement of her machinery, whatever the cause, and instead of a few hours our stay might be prolonged to several days. The first land sighted was Harbor Island, which next to New Providence contains the largest settlement, Dun-

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### *The American Tropics*

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more Town, in the Bahamas. It is about one and one-half miles square. We had thus far stood north-east but after doubling Bridge Point we took a southeastern course with the long low-lying coast line of Eleuthera Island on our starboard beam. The island is celebrated for a peculiar cliff facing the Atlantic, called the Glass Window. Cat Island appeared on the horizon about three o'clock in the afternoon. It is mainly noted as being a rival claimant for the honor of being the Guanahani of the native Indians and the San Salvador of Columbus. This claim was greatly strengthened by the opinion of such noted travelers as Humboldt and Washington Irving. More recent observations have shown this claim untenable from the description given of San Salvador in Columbus's Journal.

For several hours we seemed to live again the life of the great Genoese pilot, so intent were we on every recorded circumstance available. The cruise was rendered more

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## *A Midwinter Cruise*

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realistic by the size of our boat, although larger than the Nina in which the great navigator sailed, yet in comparison with the one to which we had grown accustomed it seemed too diminutive to tempt the uncertainties of the Atlantic. Fortunately no bad weather was encountered and aside from a marked "unsteadiness" no discomfort was felt. Late in the afternoon the sharp lookout, which everyone kept, was rewarded by the cry of "Land ahead!" As we approached the island the British flag was made out fluttering from a pole and, rounding a coral reef called Riding Rock Point, we entered the bay in which Columbus is thought to have anchored on that eventful Friday morning, October 12th, 1492. On landing, however, we were brought back four hundred and fifteen years by being greeted by the port officer, a white man, and a crowd of negroes of all sizes and degrees of color. Captain Maxwell Nairn, the port officer, magistrate, treasurer and most of the other

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### *The American Tropics*

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high offices of state combined, has lived there many years and was until recently the only white man on the island. He reminded me of Father Duncan of Metlakahla, Alaska, surrounded by his faithful followers. His lot seemed on the whole better than that of Robinson Crusoe, and he too was lord of all he surveyed, but even being the first man must be lonely in the extreme. Watlings Island is about half the size of the Isle of Man and differs from it in another important particular—not having any indigenous bob-tail cats. The island has a negro population of somewhat over six hundred. Formerly it was noted for its breed of horses, but at the present time fruits and salt are the principal products exported.

On an eminence above the bay is a stone shaft erected in 1891 by some enterprising Americans in commemoration of Christopher Columbus's discovery of America. On a tablet is the following inscription:

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## *A Midwinter Cruise*

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ON THIS SPOT  
CHRISTOPHER COLUMBUS  
FIRST SET FOOT ON THE SOIL OF  
THE NEW WORLD.  
ERECTED BY THE  
CHICAGO HERALD  
JUNE 15, 1891.

Now that I have seen where America was discovered, all doubts concerning the event have vanished and tales of previous discoveries, including the claim of Amerigo Vespucci, seem too indefinite to consider. Even the locating of the exact spot first discovered, by a newspaper from the breezy metropolis of the Middle West, does not shake my credulity, and I feel after this supreme test that my faith is unassailable. Returning as we had come, it was a great relief to find "our own boat" still standing as we had left her, but not a moment too soon had we returned for her steam was up and she was about to start on her homeward run.

There was a pleasurable feeling of antici-

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## *The American Tropics*

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pation mingled with a languid sense of melancholy as we cleared the treacherous reefs of Abaco and with full steam ahead held our course due north.

The Antilla of the ancients and El Dorado of the conquistadores, the land of golden promise—where gushed the fountain of perpetual youth! Four hundred and fifteen years have wrought many striking changes in that expanse of a new world but little known, yet at one time supposed to be limited only by the setting sun. It was not of these striking epochs in which history is made that thought stole upon me like the breath of the north-wind, but rather it was of those silent, never ceasing forces which go on shaping the destinies of men and nations that I mused as I watched the last shore line sink behind the horizon. Of what use, thought I, are vain struggles against the irresistible laws of the Infinite? We worry over race questions and a thousand and one problems with which in truth we have noth-

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## *A Midwinter Cruise*

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ing to do. For to a certain extent all must admit we are creatures of circumstance. The page is unfinished but sufficient has been written to enable one to form a fair conception concerning the final destiny, ethnologically and politically, of these so-called Islands of the Blest. By the methods of what is called civilization, especially by the aggressive participant, the original inhabitants of the Caribbean islands have been exterminated as a people. With treachery, cruelty and murder, the pale-face came and conquered. Enslaved the native American would not be — the alternative was death. But with the torrid heat and deadly plague, the mines discovered remained unworked, and the land while teeming with vegetable possibilities was unproductive. The need of workers, however, was soon supplied and this reciprocity grew until the settlement of slavery in tropical America was complete. The effect was two-fold: to the blacks the climate was congenial and healthful; as so



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much property their propagation was profitable and therefore encouraged. Taken from the jungle, they were forced to acquire a certain manual proficiency, some even became skilled in the various crafts, and all soon acquired the first step in mental improvement, the language of a civilized country.

Their days of bondage were in truth the schooldays of an infant people, and their environment was probably the schoolroom from which they could derive the greatest good. Thus, line upon line and precept upon precept until their emancipation, their graduation—and how many diplomas are given for a less degree of improvement!

We may now consider very briefly the effect of the climate and surroundings on the status of the white man. The emigrant is not always the renegade he is often pictured, especially by his home government. On the contrary he is more frequently a man of power, of reliance, and, both mentally and physi-

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## *A Midwinter Cruise*

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cally, is likely to be superior to his brother who stays at home. That the men who colonized the islands of tropical America were from the best available class we have reason to believe. Where are they to-day? In the West Indies and Bahamas the line of the early white settlers is either hopelessly merged into that forming the great majority, or, broken in health, the colonist returned to his fatherland to avert the inevitable.

The brilliant results obtained in the Panama Canal Zone have stimulated the hope that since man has rid the torrid zone of its most deadly pests and has rendered living in the tropics not only safe, but agreeable, it will become the belt of the world's greatest activity and that cities will arise rivaling the great centers of civilization of antiquity. That the torrid zone needs an occasional visitation of the energy of the temperate zone to infuse life and to direct modern methods, is true. This has been amply demonstrated

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in the Canal Zone. But that the Caucasian can thrive in low altitudes of the equatorial belt or the negro in the colder portions of the globe, is contrary to observation thus far obtained. It seems, therefore, that the lowlands of the torrid zone are destined to be peopled by the black or dark-skinned races, while the light-skinned will continue to find in a temperate climate the environment most conducive to their perfect development.

One of the most primitive races has been slowly raised to a higher grade in the scale of being within the short period of a few centuries of Caucasian occupancy, whether of pirate or of planter. That the quest of wealth or adventure offered the necessary stimulus does not lessen the service that this missionary, unconscious of his office, has rendered. Left to natural influences, the race question in its broad sense, will, in time, solve itself. To strive against it is futile.

It was with a keen sense of enthusiasm that on the third morning the snow-clad

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## *A Midwinter Cruise*

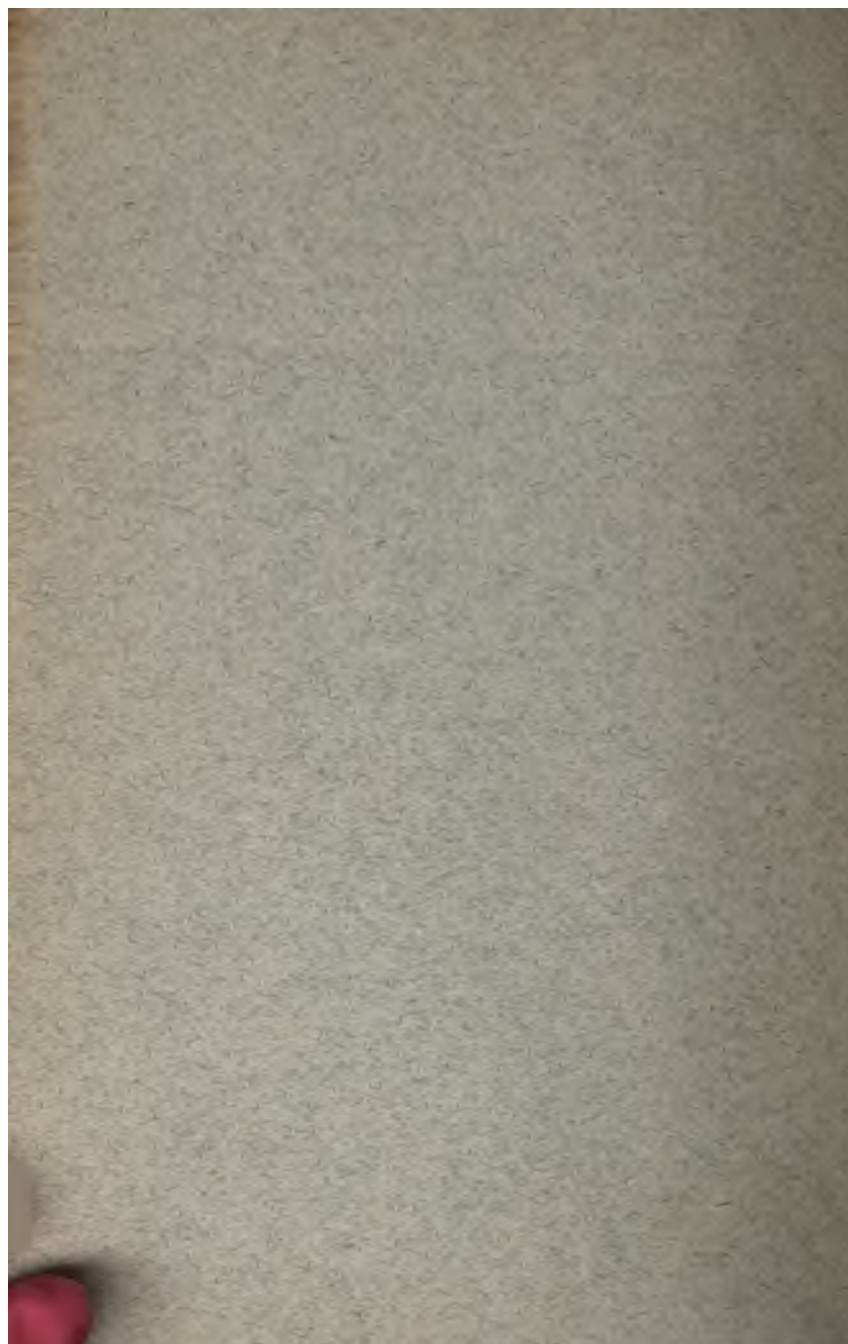
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Jersey coast was sighted, and, preparing to circumvent that modern pirate of the American custom house, one began to realize, that, viewed through the crystallized vapor of the frost king, life after all is a stern reality, and not the peaceful elysium it had seemed through the golden haze of many days and in the starlit watches of as many nights.

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